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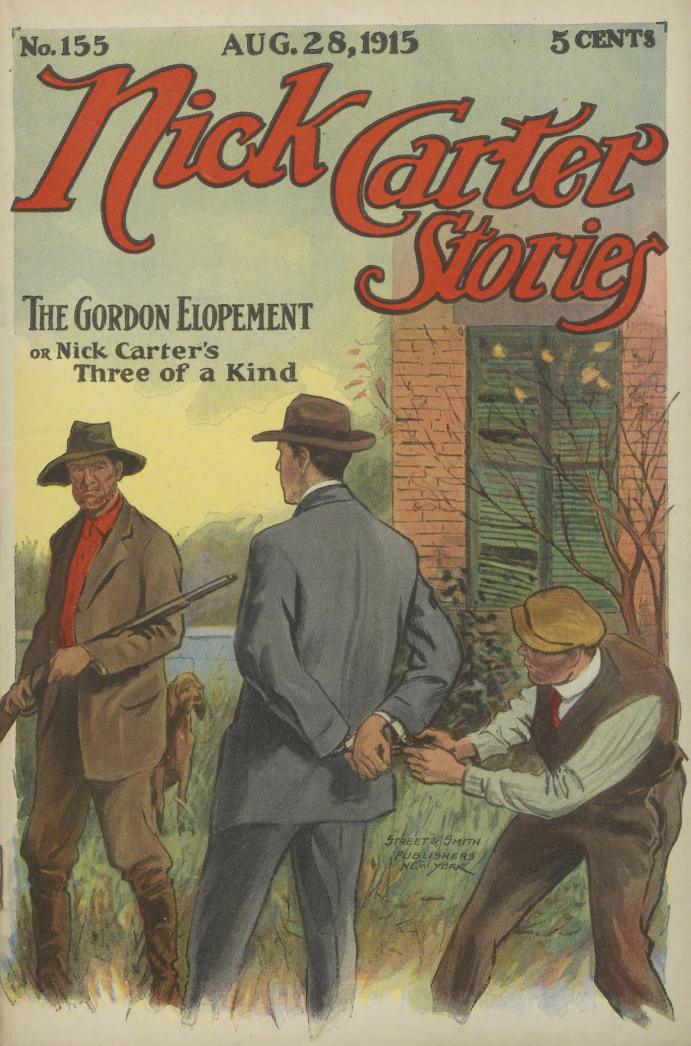
Nick Carter Stories

THE GORDON ELOPEMENT

OR Nick Carter's Three of a Kind



NICK CARTER STORIES

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THE GORDON ELOPEMENT;

Or, NICK CARTER'S THREE OF A KIND.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

AN OPEN QUESTION.

Nick Carter did not interrupt the sobbing girl. He listened patiently, grave and attentive, letting her run on in broken, desultory phrases, until her first paroxism of grief immediately following his arrival should abate sufficiently for her to tell him connectedly what had occurred.

"They may say what they will—what they will, Mr. Carter, but I cannot believe it, will not believe it," she tearfully declared. "My faith in him is unshaken. He is incapable of such deceit, such cruelty, such terrible treachery. He is the victim of a plot, a hideous conspiracy, or some terrible crime—oh, I am sure of it! He would not betray me in this way, not for life itself! I know he would not. Arthur is above such duplicity, such terrible——"

Nick now checked her with a gesture.

"I agree with you, Miss Strickland," he said kindly. "Arthur Gordon is, in my opinion, a thoroughly honorable man. As you are so sure of it, too, and that he is the victim of a conspiracy, you best can serve him by subduing your agitation, and telling me precisely what has occurred. I can do nothing, nor form any opinion of the case, until I know all of the circumstances."

"Mr. Carter is right, Wilhelmina," said her elderly uncle, Mr. Rudolph Strickland. "It is very kind of him to come out here, with his assistant, this morning. Dry your eyes, therefore, or let me talk with him. I can inform him, Mina, better than you."

"Do so, Mr. Strickland," said Nick, turning to him. "What has befallen Arthur Gordon, as far as you know?"

The scene of this interview, which was the beginning of one of the most extraordinary criminal cases in the career of the famous detective, was the library of a new and exceedingly fine wooden residence in one of the most beautiful rural sections of the Bronx.

The hour was about ten o'clock, on a charming May morning, nearly seven months since Nick Carter first met these people, and recovered for Mr. Rudolph Strickland the costly art treasures stolen from the Fifth Avenue flat, in which he then resided, resulting also in the arrest of the notorious European crook, Mortimer Deland, together with a gang of local confederates.

Nick had frequently met Arthur Gordon since then, and he knew that this wealthy young banker and broker of Wall Street was contemplating matrimony, but he was ignorant of many of the particulars which Mr. Strickland hastened to impart.

"This is Mr. Gordon's new house," said he, "though he already has deeded the entire estate to Wilhelmina, who soon is to be his wife."

"We were to be married next Wednesday evening," put in the girl more calmly.

"This is to be their home, Mr. Carter, and I am to live with them," Mr. Strickland continued. "Both insist that I shall dwell no longer alone in the flat I recently occupied."

"You now are living here, I infer," Nick remarked.

"Only Mina and I, aside from our several servants."

"I see."

"It was Arthur's wish that the wedding should take place in the home he is to occupy. So he bought this fine estate of several acres and then built and furnished this beautiful residence. It was completed nearly three weeks ago."

"It certainly is a fine place and a fine house," Nick admitted, glancing around.

"I since have been living here with Mina, while she has been making preparations for the wedding," Strickland went on. "Mr. Gordon has been living at home with his parents, in Riverside Drive, all the while, but he has been coming out here each afternoon after business hours

to direct the laborers who still are at work on various parts of the estate."

"Was he here yesterday afternoon?" Nick inquired.

"Yes, until nearly six o'clock."

"And then?"

"We supposed he would return to dinner at that time, as usual, and we sent one of the servants to call him from the golf links, where he went to supervise the work of some of the laborers. The servant returned in a few moments and stated that Mr. Gordon had gone."

"Gone where?"

"That's the question," said Mr. Strickland. "I am stating the circumstances in the order they occurred, that you may be better able to determine whether——"

"Oh, you are too slow, Uncle Rudolph," cried Wilhelmina, interrupting. "I cannot endure this suspense. Here, Mr. Carter, read this! It came by mail this morning. It will tell you, in a nutshell, what is said to have occurred; but I cannot believe it, will not believe it. They say—— Oh, Mr. Carter, they say that Arthur Gordon has deserted me, and eloped with his handsome stenographer!"

Nick had heard of such cases. He did not reply to the grief-stricken girl, nor make any comments. He took a letter which she, starting up while speaking, hurriedly brought from the library table and tendered with trembling hand.

It was a typewritten letter, on paper bearing the printed business heading of the missing banker, also the date of the previous day. It read as follows:

"My Dear Mina: I am writing you a few lines before leaving my office, on a subject which, though I am to see you within an hour, I have not the heart or courage to discuss with you in person.

"This is a late day, indeed, for me to discover that it is best for us to part permanently; that I would do you a far greater wrong in making you my wife, than in taking the step I am about to take. Conditions have arisen that make it imperative, however, and I can see no wise, or even possible, alternative. I shall be far away when you read this, and it is my intention never to return. I cannot ask you to forgive me. My only hope is that you can forget me, and in time find one more worthy of you.

"You already have the deed of the new place, which, with all it contains, I hope you will keep in part amendment of the wrong I have done you. Do please try to forget me. Arthur Gordon."

Nick Carter's grave, clean-cut face, on which Mina Strickland's tearful blue eyes were anxiously riveted, underwent no change while he read the letter. He handed it to Patsy Garvan, his junior assistant, who had accompanied him there, saying quietly:

"Read it, Patsy. The case evidently is one that we must investigate."

Patsy obeyed, without replying.

"Please tell me at once, Mr. Carter," Mina pleaded. "Do you think that——"

"That Arthur Gordon wrote it?" Nick interposed, turning to her.

"Yes."

"Frankly, Miss Strickland, I do not."

"Oh, thank Heaven for that!" cried the girl. "Your opinion is worth more to me than that of all the world. It must be, then, that he is the victim of——"

"Stop a moment," Nick again interrupted. "My opinion will be worth more after I know all of the circumstances. It now is based only upon the fact that all this is very unlike Arthur Gordon."

"It is, indeed."

"Let me question you. That will be the quickest way to bring out the salient points," said Nick. "Answer as briefly as possible. You received the letter this morning?"

"Yes, sir," said Mina, eager to proceed.

"The written signature is like Gordon's?"

"Precisely."

"You have had other letters from him, of course?"

"Yes, many, Mr. Carter."

"Were they usually typewritten?"

"No, no, very rarely. He nearly always used a pen."

"Do you know whether he can use a typewriter skillfully, or even easily?"

"I don't think so," said Mina. "I think he dictates all of his typewritten letters."

"I doubt very much, nevertheless, that he would have dictated such a letter as this," said Nick, when Patsy returned it to him.

"That's true, chief, for fair."

"Bear in mind, Mr. Carter, that it would have been dictated to the girl with whom he is said to have eloped," put in Mr. Strickland suggestively.

"Admitting that, even, he would have been much more likely to have written so personal and private a letter," Nick replied. "Who is his stenographer?"

"Her name is Pauline Perrot," said Mina.

"A French girl?"

"Of French extraction, I think."

"You have seen her?"

"Yes. She has been out here twice in the past ten days with Mr. Gordon. She boards in Fordham, through which he passes when coming out here with his touring car. He has, for that reason, frequently taken her home from his office when on his way here."

"Is she a very attractive girl?" Nick inquired.

"I don't think so," said Mina, with brows knitting. "She is tall and dark, with black hair, and eyes that frighten me. I tremble when she looks at me. She fills me with awe, and—— Oh, Mr. Carter, I have felt sure there was something wrong, some calamity coming, though I could not imagine what. A cloud has been hanging over me ever since I first saw Pauline Perrot."

"How long has she been in Gordon's employ?"

"Four or five months, I think."

"Have you suspected her of other than business relations with him?"

"Not for a moment," cried Mina. "Nor do I now believe him guilty of anything wrong. I feel sure he is the victim of a plot, a conspiracy, or——"

"One moment," said Nick. "Did he come out here with his touring car yesterday afternoon?"

"He did, but sent his chauffeur home with it. I wondered at that, Mr. Carter, for he never had done so before, nor did he offer any explanation."

"And you did not question him?"

"No, sir."

"Did he appear as usual?"

"Not quite," Wilhelmina admitted.

"In what way was he different?"

"He was more serious and self-absorbed, as if he had something on his mind. He remained with us only a

short time, then said he was going out to see how the work on the links was progressing. He added that he would return a little later. That was the last I saw of him," Mina concluded, with a sob.

"There is much more to this, Mr. Carter," said Mr. Strickland. "I went out to seek him, or make further inquiries concerning him, after our servant stated that he had gone."

"What did you learn?"

"I was told by one of the workmen that he left the links about five o'clock. When last seen by them he was walking south toward a woodland road in that locality. I continued my search in that direction, and I soon met two women who had seen him."

"Women you knew?"

"Yes, two sisters, Mary and Ellen Dawson. They could not be mistaken, for both were employed here by Mr. Gordon to help clean and settle this house."

"Ah, I see," Nick nodded. "When and where did they see him?"

"About ten minutes before, at the juncture of a cross-road half a mile from where I met them," Mr. Strickland went on. "He then was talking with Pauline Perrot. Both of the Dawson women have seen her here, and both immediately recognized her."

"There evidently was a rendezvous," said Nick.

"I think so," Mr. Strickland agreed. "Gordon then had a leather suit case, but the women did not know whether it belonged to him or his companion. She was clad in a dark-green traveling costume. When Gordon saw the two women approaching, he hurried away with Miss Perrot, as if anxious to avoid recognition."

"In which direction did they go?"

"East, through the crossroad."

"Did you continue your search?"

"I did not, Mr. Carter, for I supposed that Arthur had unexpected business to look after, having been sought by his stenographer, as I then inferred, and that he would return during the evening, or telephone to us."

"Have you telephoned to his residence this morning?"

"Yes, indeed. He was not at home last night, nor can his parents explain his absence. They supposed he spent the night here."

"Have you telephoned to his Wall Street office?"

"I have, of course—about half an hour ago," said Mr. Strickland.

"With what result?"

"Only two of the clerks then were there. They could give me no information, but I directed them to call me up at once, if Mr. Gordon came in. I have no hope of that, however, in view of the letter Mina has received."

"It does not, indeed, seem probable," Nick allowed.

"Added to all this," said Mr. Strickland, "there now are rumors, probably resulting from the gossip of the Dawson women, that Gordon has eloped with Pauline Perrot. If she is not in his office at her customary hour, ten o'clock, I shall begin to fear——"

Mr. Strickland was interrupted by the ringing of a telephone on a stand in one corner, and Wilhelmina uttered a cry, and ran to the instrument.

"Wait!" Nick exclaimed. "Let me answer it."

The girl obeyed without a remonstrance, if not quite willingly.

"Well?" queried Nick over the wire.

The response came in quick, agitated tones:

"Hello! I want Mr. Gordon, if he is there, or Mr. Strickland. Hurry!"

"Mr. Gordon is not here. Who are you?"

"Mr. Beckwith, his cashier. Where can I communicate with Mr. Gordon? Do you know? He was not at home last night. I have just called up his residence. I must find him, or——"

"One moment, Mr. Beckwith," Nick interrupted. "This is Nick Carter talking."

"Nick Carter! Good heavens! What has occurred out there?"

"Tell me, instead, what is wrong in Gordon's office, that you are so disturbed."

"Wrong enough!" came the quick reply. "Cash, bonds, and securities, aggregating sixty thousand dollars, are missing from the vault. Unless Mr. Gordon removed them——"

"Wait!" Nick commanded a bit sharply. "Is Pauline Perrot there?"

"She is not. She has not come in yet."

Nick glanced at a French clock on the mantel.

It struck the half hour at that moment, a single stroke, like a sudden death knell—the half after ten.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN WHO ESCAPED.

Nick Carter decided instantly what must be done, also not done. He continued talking with Beckwith without a perceptible pause.

Nick questioned him briefly, obtained Pauline Perrot's Fordham address, and he then directed him to give no publicity to the matter, but to await the arrival of Chick Carter, his chief assistant, whom he would immediately send to Gordon's office to investigate the case.

Nick then called up the library in his Madison Avenue house and talked with Chick. He gave him a brief outline of the circumstances, together with such instructions as were necessary, and he then directed him to report in person at Gordon's residence in the Bronx.

"It will take him a couple of hours at least," he remarked to Patsy, after hanging up the receiver. "We can get in our work elsewhere, in the meantime, and return before he arrives."

Naturally, of course, several pertinent questions had arisen in Nick's mind, and which could not consistently be ignored, in spite of his high opinion of Arthur Gordon.

Was he really the writer of the letter received by Mina Strickland? Had conditions really arisen which made imperative the course he said he was about to shape?

Had he realized at that late day, indeed, that he was not as deeply in love with Wilhelmina as he had supposed? Had he, too, become helplessly infatuated with Pauline Perrot, and as an only desperate resort determined to desert Miss Strickland and elope with the stenographer?

Was it he, in that case, who had taken the cash, bonds, and securities from the vault in his office? Had he sacrificed all but that small part of his fortune, to say nothing of character, friends, and family, for a mad love for another woman?

In view of the fact that Gordon had been acting voluntarily, and in a measure had deceived the Stricklands as to his intentions the previous afternoon, Nick could not but give the foregoing questions serious con-

sideration. He had, as observed before, known of such cases. They were common enough, in fact, and what man has done, man may do.

Nick's face reflected none of his thoughts, however, when he turned from the telephone and stated what he had learned; and the effect upon Wilhelmina was about what he was anticipating.

"Good heavens, is it possible?" she exclaimed, ghastly with increasing apprehensions. "All that money gone from his vault? Don't keep me in suspense, Mr. Carter. Tell me just what you think about it. Tell me——"

"I must look deeper into the matter, Miss Strickland, before I can tell you anything definite," Nick interposed evasively. "I have not changed my opinion, such as it was, and I will lose no time in sifting the matter to the bottom. Try to be patient until I have done so."

"I will try, Mr. Carter, at least," she replied. "But all this must be the culmination of the terrible secret dread I have been feeling."

"Secret dread?"

"I say that only because I have not mentioned it to any one, being unable to ascribe a definite cause for it," Mina explained. "But it has been hanging over me like a depressing cloud ever since I first saw Pauline Perrot—ever since, in fact, the escape of that terrible criminal, Mortimer Deland, from the prison hospital."

"Yes, I remember," said Nick, regarding her more intently.

"You were employed by Arthur, you remember, to run him down," she went on. "I have heard that Mortimer Deland never forgets, nor ever forgives. Since that extraordinary escape, Mr. Carter, I have lived in fear of him, for fear that he might attempt to kill Mr. Gordon, or in some terrible way avenge——"

"Pshaw!" Nick checked her kindly. "Put Deland out of your head. It is unfortunate, of course, that he fooled the hospital guards, and contrived to give them the slip."

"Unfortunate, indeed."

"But as far as seeking vengeance goes, it is much more probable that he immediately fled to Europe, whence he came," Nick added. "Besides, I am the man he would seek, and not Gordon, for it was I who cornered and convicted him. There is no occasion for those apprehensions, Miss Strickland."

"I hope not, I'm sure," said Mina. "You are going?"

Nick had taken his hat from a table on which he had placed it.

"Yes," he replied. "I will return in a couple of hours, however, and Chick may arrive in the meantime. We will leave no stone unturned to ferret out the truth."

He led the way out to his touring car, in which Danny, his chauffeur, had been waiting in front of the house.

"To Fordham, Danny," he directed. "Let her go lively."

"Why to Fordham, chief?" questioned Patsy, when both were seated in the tonneau and the car was speeding down the long driveway to the rural road.

"To inspect Pauline Perrot's apartments and interview her landlady," said Nick, with rather ominous intonation.

"Do you suspect her of being a crook?"

"I think she is back of this whole business, Patsy, of whatever it consists."

"Gee, that looks like a cinch!" declared Patsy. "Either she is playing a deep game, chief, and working it out with wonderful success, or Gordon has lost his head completely and bolted with the woman."

"The last may possibly be true, since other men have been equally foolish," said Nick. "I find it hard to believe of Arthur Gordon, however."

"That goes, too."

"I doubt very much that he would have gone so far as to buy a big estate, build and furnish a fine residence, and then bolt with a girl he has known less than six months."

"But he evidently met her voluntarily yesterday afternoon."

"She may have wheedled him into doing so."

"But how, if Gordon did not remove them, could she have got the bonds and securities from his vault?"

"Chick will try to find out. I have left that to him, and given him all of the necessary points. It is useless for us to speculate upon it."

"Gee, it's surely some case, chief, and likely to become a difficult one," said Patsy. "It's odd, too, that Miss Strickland has felt so apprehensive of deviltry by Mortimer Deland since his escape."

"That's like a girl of her sensitive nature."

"For all that, chief, Deland must be a mighty slick gink, or he never could have given the hospital guards the slip in female attire, to say nothing of having contrived to secretly get the garments. That whole business is still a mystery."

"And likely to continue one," said Nick. "It looked to me like bribery, Patsy, rather than cleverness on Deland's part, and the bribery of a prison official is difficult to expose."

"That's right, too."

"It was no fault of ours, however, for we did our part when we rounded up the rascals," Nick added. "Take the road to the left, Danny. I'll give you the street and number after we hit the town."

CHAPTER III.

CONFIRMATORY EVIDENCE.

It was eleven o'clock when the touring car containing the detectives stopped in front of an attractive wooden residence in a quiet and very reputable section of Fordham.

Nick directed Patsy to accompany him, while Danny waited in the car, and his ring brought an elderly, refined-looking woman to the door, whom Nick at first supposed was one of the boarders.

"I wish to see Mrs. Lord, the landlady," he informed her.

"I am Mrs. Lord, sir," was the reply, smiling. "Will you walk in?"

"Yes, thank you. I wish to inquire about one of your boarders."

"One of them!" The woman laughed lightly. "I have only one, sir, and I consented to take her only to slightly increase my limited income. I do not keep what might be more properly termed a boarding house. What Miss Perrot pays me enables me to keep an extra servant, which relieves me of most of the housework. Will you be seated, gentlemen?"

They had followed her into a neatly furnished parlor, and Nick now saw plainly that she was an unassuming and thoroughly honest woman, one upon whom a crafty

person could very easily impose. He reasoned, too, that that might be why Pauline Perrot was established there.

"Your boarder is Miss Perrot?" he said inquiringly.

"Yes, sir."

"Is she at home?"

"Oh, no, she never is here at this hour," said the landlady. "She is employed as a stenographer by a New York banker, Mr. Arthur Gordon. But she now is away on a visit. She will be gone about a week."

"Gee! that's sure to be the longest week on record," thought Patsy.

"When did she go, Mrs. Lord?" Nick inquired.

"She left from her office yesterday, sir, but she sent her trunk away two days ago."

"Why did she send her trunk in advance?"

"I don't know, sir. I did not inquire."

"Did you know Miss Perrot before she came to board here?"

"I did not, sir. She was a stranger."

"Do you now know anything definite about her?"

"Only what she has told me."

"I'm afraid that is not very reliable."

"Dear me! What do you mean?" Mrs. Lord exclaimed apprehensively. "Who are you, sir, that you question me in this way about her?"

"My name is Carter. I am a detective," Nick now informed her. "Mr. Gordon is mysteriously missing, also a considerable fortune from his office safe. Miss Perrot is suspected of——"

"Not of having robbed Mr. Gordon?" interrupted the landlady incredulously. "Oh, I cannot believe that, sir! She has repeatedly told me that Mr. Gordon was quite likely to marry her."

"I would not take much stock in what she has told you," Nick dryly advised. "Nor do I think it probable that she will ever return here."

"Well, well, you amaze me!"

"Has she been receiving any visitors while here?"

"No, sir, never!" said Mrs. Lord emphatically. "I often have wondered at that. She has no mail, nor appears to have any friends, except Mr. Gordon. He frequently has brought her home from his office, but he never came in."

"Did she go out evenings?"

"Yes, occasionally. But she always returned at a reasonable hour, and always alone."

"I wish to inspect her room, Mrs. Lord," said Nick. "This is a very serious matter, or I would not make the request."

"If all you have told me is true, sir, I cannot consistently refuse," was the reply. "I will show you the way."

Both Nick and Patsy followed her upstairs and into an attractively furnished front chamber.

"Everything is in order, Mr. Carter, but I have deferred sweeping and cleaning the room until the day before I expected Miss Perrot to return," she said, when they entered.

"We will disturb nothing," Nick replied. "Has she sent away all of her garments?"

"I cannot say, Mr. Carter. I have not looked."

"I will do so, then, with your permission," Nick remarked.

He did not wait for a reply, but at once began a thorough inspection of the room. In the wardrobe closet were some partly worn garments, two shirt waists, a blue woolen skirt, an Eton jacket, and a single pair of button boots on the floor.

Nick examined all of these very carefully, hoping to find some suggestive mark on one of them, or evidence of some significance, but the examination proved entirely futile. They were no different from the garments of a thousand and one other young women.

The drawer of the dressing stand was empty, while the china trays on top contained only a few hairpins, a plated stickpin of no great value, and a few equally insignificant articles.

In one of the bureau drawers, however, Nick found a quantity of underwear, including two pairs of stockings, of all of which he at first made only a cursory examination. He soon noticed one curious fact, however, and remarked to Patsy:

"By Jove, this is strange!"

"What's that, chief?" questioned Patsy, joining him at the bureau.

"All of this underwear is new," Nick pointed out. "Not a piece of it has been worn."

"You're right, chief." Patsy peered into the drawer. "That's plain enough."

"But why it was left here is not so plain," said Nick. "A girl going away on a visit usually takes her best garments in preference to those she has worn."

"That's right, too, chief," Patsy agreed. "But she may be well supplied."

"I'm not at all sure that that explains it," Nick replied dryly. "What have you there?"

"Fragments of a letter from the waste basket, also the torn envelope in which it came," said Patsy. "It is written in French."

"I thought you said, Mrs. Lord, that Miss Perrot has received no letters while here?" said Nick, turning to the waiting landlady. "My assistant has found one in her wastebasket."

"I meant, sir, that she was not in the habit of receiving letters," Mrs. Lord hastened to explain. "A letter did come for her two days ago. It was taken in and brought up to her by my servant. I really had forgotten it."

"I understand," smiled Nick. "I must ask you to wait, however, while I unite these fragments, so I can read the letter."

"I am in no hurry, sir."

"Written in French, eh?" Nick muttered, while he and Patsy seated themselves at a table. "We soon can patch it together. It may provide a clew to the girl's identity."

"That was my idea, chief," nodded Patsy. "There is nothing doing in the desk. I have searched it thoroughly."

"Is there paste in the desk?"

"Yes."

"Get it, also a sheet of blank paper," Nick directed. "This letter is written on only one side of the sheet. We can quickly unite the torn edges and paste it to the other."

The task was completed in a few minutes. The following letter, dated two days before, and written in French with a pen and ink, then was brought to light:

"My Dear Pauline: You have made me heartless, thoroughly heartless, and I ought to hate you for it. I

am not sure that I do not. Though horribly averse to taking the hideous step upon which you insist, your threats leave me no sane alternative, none that would let me look my family and friends in the face.

"I submit to what you require, therefore, but I will not leave with you until Thursday. I must adjust many personal matters, and also prepare for the future. One cannot live on love and kisses.

"Make it Thursday, therefore, and in accord with the plans you have suggested. Not a word about it in the office to-morrow. It staggers me when I think of it, the horrible situation in which you have involved me. Some men would wipe you out of existence, as I perhaps shall—but, no, no, I could not live with human blood on my hands. Shame, sorrow, and remorse are terrible enough.

"After Thursday—— Well, we shall see!

"ARTHUR GORDON."

"Great guns! What do you make of that, chief?" questioned Patsy, after both had read the letter, both being familiar with the French language.

"We will discuss it later," Nick quietly replied. "This woman has ears, you know, and a tongue."

"I've got you."

Nick slipped the letter into his pocket, also the torn envelope, then arose and turned to the landlady.

"Do you know where Miss Perrot sent her trunk, or who took it away?" he inquired.

"I do not, Mr. Carter. A man with a wagon came after it."

"An expressman?"

"I don't think so. There was no name on the wagon."

"You saw the man and the team?"

"I did, sir."

"Can you describe them?"

"Only in a general way. The man was short, thickset, and quite dark. The horse was a gray one, and the wagon of moderate size, without a top."

"Very good," Nick said approvingly. "There is no doubt in my mind, Mrs. Lord, that Pauline Perrot will never return to this house. She is probably a very clever criminal."

"In that case, Mr. Carter, I hope she never will return," Mrs. Lord said gravely. "I am much surprised. I would not have thought it."

"Have you missed anything from the house?"

"I have not, sir. I now see, however, that a brush and comb which I loaned her are gone from the dressing stand."

"H'm! Is that so?"

"She may have taken them by accident when packing her trunk."

Nick did not reply. Instead, turning to Patsy, he said:

"Raise both curtains, Patsy, as high as they will go."

Then, dropping on his hands and knees, Nick began a sharp scrutiny of the carpet and a rug near the dressing stand, much to the amazement of the waiting woman.

For more than ten minutes he continued this inspection, and at times using a lens and picking something from the floor. When he arose he had between his fingers several black hairs, some quite long, which evidently had dropped from Pauline Perrot's brush or comb. He inclosed them in his notebook, which he then replaced in his pocket.

"Now, Mrs. Lord, I am going to take away these few garments Miss Perrot left here," Nick informed her. "Here is my card. If any inquiries are made, which is entirely improbable, you may refer the person to me."

The woman glanced at the card, then gazed more intently at the famous detective. She evidently had heard of him, but had not suspected his identity till then, for she said quickly:

"Very well, Mr. Carter. I am sure that anything you do will be right and proper."

Nick bowed and glanced at Patsy.

"Roll up the garments and the pair of boots in the wardrobe closet," he directed. "Take them out to the car. I will bring the underwear in the bureau."

It was noon when they departed with the various articles, all that Pauline Perrot had left as links in the chain, or to tell a fateful and tragic story.

"Back to the Gordon place, Danny," said Nick, after he and Patsy were seated.

More than half the distance had been covered, when, rounding a curve in the woodland road, two figures appeared some fifty yards in advance of the speeding car.

One was a gaunt, lop-eared hound.

The other was a roughly clad man of middle age, with a shotgun under his left arm, and under his right a large bundle. He turned quickly, as he heard the approaching car, then stepped to the middle of the road and held up the gun.

"Slow down, Danny," Nick commanded. "That fellow wants us to stop."

"Gee!" exclaimed Patsy, a bit derisively. "He's got a gun. Are we up against a holdup?"

"Nothing of that kind. He has something to say to us."

Nick was right. For when the car stopped near him, the man approached and said a bit gruffly:

"Gimme a lift, gents, will you? I want to go to Jim Bailey's house, a mile farther on. He's a county constable. There has been a murder."

"A murder?" Nick echoed. "How do you know? What have you there?"

"Some things Ginger sniffed out of some underbrush near the old millpond back in the woods a piece," said the man, with a glance at the hound. "I saw a man and a girl plugging that way early yesterday evening. She had this hat on. I'll swear to that, and she was lugging this jacket on her arm. Have a look at them."

The man unrolled a dark-green jacket and a stylish, velvet hat of the same hue. The latter was sadly battered and out of shape, as if beaten with a bludgeon. A crumpled handkerchief fell to the ground.

"Here are two worked letters on the handkerchief," he added, picking it up. "P. P., as near as I can tell."

"Pauline Perrot!" cried Patsy, momentarily excited.

He had recalled the description of the dark-green traveling suit worn by Pauline Perrot, as reported by the two women who had seen her with Arthur Gordon.

They were, indeed, the garments of the suspected girl. All of them were soiled and—red with blood.

CHAPTER IV.

CHICK FORMS A THEORY.

It was eleven o'clock when Chick Carter, following the telephone instructions from Nick, entered Arthur Gordon's business quarters in Wall Street to begin an investigation. He saw at once that the several clerks in the

latticed inclosure were somewhat excited. Business appeared to have been suspended.

Chick found Mr. Beckwith in Gordon's private office, adjoining the business inclosure, a man well in the sixties and of a nervous temperament.

"Thank Heaven, you have arrived, Mr. Carter," said he, when Chick entered and introduced himself. "This is terrible, terrible! Gordon mysteriously missing. Miss Perrot gone. The vault robbed of——"

"Hold your horses, Mr. Beckwith," Chick coollly interrupted, after closing the office door. "There is nothing in going over the traces. Nick has told me most of the circumstances, as far as known. Calm yourself, and answer my questions."

"Well, well, I will try. But there is nothing I can tell you."

"Don't be so sure of that."

"Sit down, then. Come on with your questions!"

"To begin with," said Chick, complying, "have you seen any indications that Gordon and Pauline Perrot are in love, any sign of it on the part of either?"

"No, no, never!" Beckwith quickly asserted. "Mr. Gordon is a gentleman, and soon to be married. Miss Perrot knows her place, and has always kept it, so far as I have observed."

"At what time did she and Gordon leave here yesterday afternoon?"

"I don't know. They were the last to leave."

"Who was the last before them?"

"I was. It then was about four o'clock. All the other clerks had gone."

"Where was Mr. Gordon when you left?"

"Here in his private office. He was talking with Miss Perrot."

"Was the door open?"

"Yes."

"Was he dictating letters, or——"

"'No, he was talking with her," Beckwith interrupted. "I could not tell what he was saying, however, for both were talking in French."

"Have they been in the habit of doing so?"

"Sometimes. Mr. Gordon speaks the language fluently and Miss Perrot is of French descent. I think that is one reason why he employed her when she applied for a situation."

"Has her work been satisfactory?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"You are the cashier?"

"Yes. I have charge here, subject to Mr. Gordon's orders, of course."

"Did you close and lock the vault before leaving?"

"I did not. Mr. Gordon had been using two books that always are put in the vault," Beckwith proceeded to explain. "I asked him if I should do so, and close it before leaving, but he replied that he would attend to it, and that I might go. I did so, of course, not knowing how long he might remain here."

"That left Gordon and Miss Perrot alone here."

"Yes."

"Are you sure that the missing cash, bonds, and securities then were in the vault?" Chick inquired.

"I am positive about the cash, for I had put it in the vault within half an hour," Beckwith replied. "The bonds and securities, however, were tied in several packages, and were in an interior drawer, or should have been. They have been there for nearly a month, as we have had no occasion to use them."

"Did Miss Perrot know they were there?"

"She did."

"Has she had access to the vault when in performance of her customary duties?"

"Yes, at times. Mr. Gordon frequently sent her to the vault for books, papers, or whatever he might want."

"Could she have opened the interior drawer containing the bonds and securities?"

"Not without a key."

"Who has a key to it?"

"Only Mr. Gordon and myself."

"That drawer is always kept locked, I infer?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Could Pauline Perrot, by any means, have obtained an impression of your key to that particular drawer?"

"No, no, it would have been impossible," Beckwith declared. "My keys are never out of my possession."

"How about Gordon's?"

"It might have been possible, Mr. Carter. He sometimes leaves his ring of keys hanging in the lock of his roll-top desk, after having opened it. I have seen them there, and cautioned him about it. But it is a habit of his."

"I see," Chick nodded. "How recently, speaking positively, can you say that the bonds and securities were in the drawer?"

"Three days," Beckwith said promptly. "I then added a package to them. I don't think I have opened the drawer since then."

"Has Gordon done so?"

"I don't think so."

"Is there any time during business hours, Mr. Beckwith, that Pauline Perrot could have removed the bonds and securities without being seen?"

"Possibly."

"At what time?"

"When I and some of the other clerks were out to dinner. Mr. Gordon always was here at that time. No one in the outer office would have thought it strange if Miss Perrot went into the vault. It would have been inferred that Mr. Gordon had sent her. I don't see, nevertheless, how she could possibly have concealed the packages."

"Pockets in her underskirts," Chick said tersely. "That would have been child's play. I suspect, Mr. Beckwith, that that is how the theft was committed."

"But the cash——"

"That's another matter," Chick interrupted. "She may have found a chance to slip into the vault and get it before she and Gordon left there yesterday afternoon. How much cash is missing?"

"Two thousand dollars. It was in notes of large denomination, and in packages confined with paper straps."

"Was any cash left in the vault?"

"Yes, considerable, and all of the specie."

"That seems to confirm my belief," said Chick. "If the theft had been deliberately committed, with no occasion for haste and fear of detection, the thief would have taken all of the bank notes, at least."

"I see the point," Beckwith bowed.

"And I have not the slightest doubt that Pauline Perrot was the thief," Chick added. "Do you know whether she left here in company with Gordon?"

"I know she did not," Beckwith replied. "I have inquired in the other offices in this corridor. I could find only one person who saw Mr. Gordon leave. He was alone and was carrying a leather suit case. Mr. Dayton saw him come out and head for the corridor and stairway leading to the side door of the building."

"Does Gordon usually go that way?"

"I don't remember ever having seen him do so."

"Who is Mr. Dayton?"

"He is the American agent for an English pottery concern. He has an office on the opposite side of the adjoining corridor. The elevator boy has told me that Miss Perrot left soon after four, and that she was alone. Dayton is sure it was later than that when he saw Mr. Gordon."

"You could find no one else who saw him?"

"No, sir. I have made exhaustive inquiries."

"Did Mr. Gordon bring in a suit case yesterday, or was there one here that you know of?" Chick questioned.

"I don't think he has brought one in recently," said Beckwith, shaking his head. "There may have been one here, however, in that closet," he added, pointing to a door in one corner of the private office.

Chick arose and looked into the small wardrobe closet, but it contained nothing of special significance. He turned back, closing the door and remarking:

"You must do nothing about this matter, nor give it further publicity, until you hear from me again, or from Nick. I do not wish to question you further, but I will have a look at the vault."

Beckwith arose to conduct him to it.

Chick made only a brief inspection of the vault, however, finding nothing further on which to base an opinion, and he then repeated his instructions to Beckwith and the other clerks and departed.

He did not immediately leave the building. He went, instead, to verify Beckwith's statements by having a brief interview with the one man said to have seen Gordon departing the previous afternoon.

Chick found his office door a little farther down the corridor. It bore a neatly printed sign:

"Edgar Hereford Dayton, Agent."

"Humph! That's a good bit English, don't you know," he said to himself, while he scrutinized the name. "I guess 'e come from Staffordshire, all right. I'll have a look at him."

Trying the door, Chick found that it yielded, and he stepped into the small but well-equipped office. There was a wardrobe closet, a roll-top desk, and on a table lay a pile of illustrated business catalogues.

A man seated at the desk turned deliberately in his swivel chair and gazed at his visitor through a pair of gold-bowed glasses. He was a man of medium build, clad in a rather striking plaid suit.

He appeared to be about forty years old, a man with brown hair and a carefully trimmed beard, eyebrows that curved upward at the outer ends, a quite florid complexion, and eyes that had a keen and searching expression.

"Good morning," said Chick, after closing the door. "You are Mr. Dayton?"

"Yaas, surely," was the reply, with a rather affected drawl. "What can I do for you?"

"My name is Carter," said Chick. "I have been talking with Mr. Beckwith, the cashier over in Gordon's office. He——"

"Oh, yaas!" Dayton cut in, with more manifest interest. "He was telling me about a bad mess over there, deucedly bad, I judge. I say, you're not an inspector, are you?"

Chick smiled and took the chair to which Dayton politely waved him.

"That is what they call men of my vocation in England," he replied. "Here, in America, we are detectives."

"Yaas, yaas, I see," nodded Dayton, laughing and showing his teeth. "I don't quite get away from the home lingo, you know."

"I inferred that you were English."

"Yaas, that's right, Mr. Carter. I've been over 'ere only a few months. Don't 'ang round New York but part of the time. Traveling 'ere and there most of it. But I 'ave to 'ave an office 'ere, you know. I say, what can I do for you?"

Not for a moment had his keen, intent eyes left the face of the detective.

"Well, Beckwith was telling me that you saw Gordon leaving his office yesterday afternoon," said Chick, declining a cigarette the Englishman now tendered, while he lit one for himself.

"Yaas, surely. I told Beckwith so."

"Can you tell me precisely what time it was when you saw Gordon?"

"Well, no, I really don't think I can," Dayton drawled thoughtfully. "I can 'it mighty near it, though."

"What time would you say, Mr. Dayton?"

"Well, I lunched late with Percy Brigham, a Lunnon friend 'oo is over 'ere. It must 'ave been four o'clock when I left him. I'd say it was quarter past four when I saw Mr. Gordon, then leaving his office. I was unlocking my door, and he passed right by me."

"Are you acquainted with him?"

"Yaas, in a small way."

"Did he speak when passing?"

"No, he did not, the which 'it me kind of funny," said Dayton. "He looked a bit bunged up by something, I thought, so I didn't speak to him. He went round to the back corridor, don't you know, and that was the last I saw of him."

"You told Beckwith, I think, that he was carrying a suit case."

"Yaas, so he was," Dayton quickly nodded. "A leather suit case, and I thought he must be going away."

"Did you observe anything else about him?" Chick inquired. "Did he appear pale, or as if mentally disturbed?"

"Waal, yaas, I'd say he looked a bit punk around the ears," Dayton drawled slowly. "I wouldn't want you to bank too' eavy on what I'm saying, though, for I saw him only a moment, don't you know. I don't think as 'ow I can add to it."

Chick Carter was of the same opinion. There was something very insipid in this Englishman's voice and manner, aside from his expressive eyes, and despite that he somehow impressed Chick as one whom he had seen before, the latter decided that he had nothing to gain by interrogating him further.

Chick thanked him for his information, therefore, then arose and departed. Seeking the street, he hailed the first taxicab he could see, and at once started for the Gordon residence to report to Nick.

Mr. Edgar Hereford Dayton sat for a long time gazing

at his desk. The minutes crept away far more rapidly than he imagined. All the while, too, his eyes had a gleam and glitter doubly intense than before.

He arose, at length, and shook his fist at the closed door.

Then, opening the wardrobe closet, he drew out a suit case, into which, with what it already contained, he crowded—a blue dress, hat, and veil, a woman's underskirt, and smaller articles that scarce need mention.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN WITH A DOG.

Nick Carter had a keen eye for faces, remarkably keen, and that of the man encountered while he was returning to the Gordon residence did not appeal favorably to the discerning detective.

It was an angular, swarthy face, with a sinister expression accentuated by several days' growth of stubby beard, and a certain sly, shifty light in the fellow's eyes aroused in Nick a feeling of suspicion.

Suppressing any betrayal of it, nevertheless, he exhibited an immediate interest in the bloodstained articles the man was displaying, asking earnestly, while he subdued Patsy Garvan with a significant nudge:

"When did you find these, my man?"

"'Twasn't me as found them," was the quick reply. "Ginger found them. He nosed them out. He's got a scent like a bull moose in the hunting season. I pulled them out from under a log and some underbrush, after Ginger found them."

"How long ago was that?" asked Nick.

"Less than half an hour."

"And how far from here?"

"Less than a mile. I reckoned a murder——"

"One moment," Nick interposed. "What is your name?"

"Pete Henley. I live off yonder in the crossroad a piece. I was gunning for birds around the pond when I struck this sort of game."

"Did you find any other evidence of a murder?"

"That's what," nodded Henley. "Blood on the grass and bushes. Some are trampled down, and a lot of footprints and heel holes in the ground point to an ugly fight."

"I see," Nick said gravely. "That does look bad."

"I did not wait to hunt for the girl's body," Henley went on, with grim glibness. "It might be in the pond. I reckoned I'd better rush these things to Bailey, the constable, and then show him where Ginger found them."

Nick was quick to notice that the man invariably attributed the discovery to his dog, rather than taking it upon himself, from which there appeared to be only one logical deduction—that Henley had some covert reason for doing so.

"You can do better, Mr. Henley, than take these to the constable," said Nick, who had merely glanced at the bloodstained articles.

"How's that?" questioned Henley.

"I am a New York detective, Nick Carter, and I am already investigating the disappearance of the two persons you claim to have seen last evening," Nick explained agreeably. "The man is Arthur Gordon, the banker, and the girl is his stenographer, Pauline Perrot. She is known to have worn a hat and jacket like these yesterday afternoon. Besides, her initials are on the handkerchief."

Henley's jaw sagged perceptibly when he heard the detective's name.

"I dunno about that," he demurred. "D'ye mean you want me to go with you?"

"Certainly," said Nick, in friendly fashion. "I would not permit Constable Bailey to interfere with my work on the case. I never allow anything of that kind."

"But he might——"

"Never mind Bailey," Nick insisted. "I will take charge of these articles, and I may want you to aid me further. So get into the car with us, Henley, and go to the Gordon place. There will be something in it for you, if you help us solve this mystery. There is room for your dog, also. Tumble in with him."

"I dunno——"

"Nonsense! You want to see justice done, don't you?" Nick demanded. "If you don't——"

"Yes, yes, sure," Henley now cried, as if suddenly hit with an idea that a persistent refusal would occasion suspicion. "That's just what I want. That's why I was hiking to see the constable. But I'll go with you, Mr. Carter, and later will show you where Ginger found these things, if you say so."

"That's precisely what I want, Mr. Henley."

"He's got some nose, this dog," Henley added, while he seized the scrawny animal and tossed him into the car. "Some nose, that's what he's got. Ginger can't be beat."

"He looks bright and intelligent," Nick allowed pleasantly. "Sit in front with the chauffeur, Henley, but put the articles Ginger found into the tonneau. That's the stuff. I'll examine them after we reach the Gordon place. Let her go, Danny."

The remaining distance was speedily covered, with merely cursory inquiries and remarks by the detective, well calculated to relieve Henley of any misgivings. Upon arriving at the house, however, he turned to Patsy and said:

"Go in ahead and tell Mr. Strickland and Wilhelmina that they must go upstairs and remain until I send for them. I don't want them butting in. You need not explain in just those words, however."

"I'm wise, chief," said Patsy, springing from the car. "I'll clear the field for you."

"Leave the car here, Danny, and take Henley and the dog around to the kitchen," Nick then directed. "Have the cook give Ginger some meat. You'll kindly wait there till I'm ready to talk with you, Henley, won't you?"

"Sure thing, Mr. Carter, if you say so," Henley quickly consented.

"Good enough!"

"I'm right here to lend you a hand."

Nick detected in the fellow's narrow eyes, nevertheless, that same sly and shifty gleam he at first had noticed, a look that seemed to give the lie to his apparently agreeable consent.

Patsy returned a moment later to assist in taking the various articles into the house, stating that Wilhelmina and her uncle had complied with the detective's request.

It was nearly one o'clock when Chick Carter arrived in a taxicab, directing the chauffeur to wait, and Patsy appeared at the door to admit him.

"Gee whiz!" he said quietly. "You're just in time."

"Time for what?" Chick questioned.

"To see the chief cut loose," said Patsy. "Talk about

having a long head. No four-footed beast has got anything on him, ears included."

"I'm well aware of that, Patsy, already."

"But this yanks the bun. Wait a bit and you'll see. Come into the library."

Nick Carter then had been studying the evidence he had found for nearly half an hour, but he really had mentioned to Patsy only a few of his discoveries and deductions, being too absorbed in the work to discuss it.

With a lens in his hand, and a frown on his intent, clean-cut face, he was bending over a table on which the various articles had been placed, and which gave Chick some little surprise when he saw them.

"Great guns!" said he, approaching. "Are you starting a secondhand-clothing store,"

"Not by a long chalk," said Nick. "I'm starting a ball rolling that will probably crush a gang of crooks. Sit down. Have you been to Gordon's office?"

"Certainly."

"What have you learned? Close the door again, Patsy."

Chick then made his report in detail, adding confidently:

"Take it from me, Nick, Pauline Perrot is a remarkably clever crook. I'll wager my pile that she is the one who robbed the vault, in spite of Gordon's mysterious absence and his suspected relations with her."

Nick smiled a bit oddly.

"Have a look at this evidence, Chick, while I tell you where we found it," he replied. "You may change your mind."

Chick hastened to comply, while Nick mentioned all of the essential points in the case, as thus far presented.

Chick's face became more grave while he looked and listened. He twice read the letter found in Pauline Perrot's wastebasket, bearing Gordon's signature, and then he glanced at the bloodstained garments she was known to have worn when last seen with him.

"By Jove, I may be wrong, after all," he said seriously. "The case looks different to me. It must have been Gordon himself who took the bonds and money from the vault. Are you sure this is his writing?"

"Here is a specimen of his writing," said Nick, taking a letter from the library desk. "Compare them."

CHAPTER VI.

NICK CARTER'S FINE WORK.

Chick Carter was not long in coming to a conclusion concerning the two letters Nick had submitted to him.

"By Jove, the writing appears to be identical," said he, after a careful inspection. "If this one in French is a forgery, Nick, it's a mighty clever one."

"Don't overlook something," said Nick, smiling a bit oddly.

"What's that?"

"You already have sized up Pauline Perrot as a clever crook."

"That's true," Chick admitted. "In proof of it, assuming this Gordon letter to be genuine, it shows plainly that she has involved him in some kind of a desperate situation, so desperate that he evidently consented to elope with her, despite that he closes by intimating that he might attempt to kill her."

"Obviously," Nick agreed.

"Has he done it?" Chick glanced at the bloodstained hat, jacket and handkerchief. "Did he really go the limit and execute his threat? These things certainly point to that. Combined with all of the other circumstances, Nick, it establishes an almost sure case of murder."

"One that, in case Gordon cannot be found, would convince a court and jury?"

"Surely."

"Suppose the body should not be found?" suggested Nick.

"I think the case still would stand," Chick replied. "A jury would surely convict on such circumstantial evidence as this."

Nick smiled again.

"That's why I have dug into it for all I am worth," he said dryly. "I will show you a few points that you fail to detect."

"You mean?"

"These few hairs, Chick, to begin with," said Nick, taking them from a scrap of paper on which he had placed them. "Mrs. Lord told me that Pauline Perrot had stolen a brush and comb. That suggested something to me."

"What was that?"

"A hairbrush cannot be entirely cleaned of all the hairs it takes in among its bristles. I reasoned that Pauline Perrot decided that it was much easier to steal the brush than to clean it, and less dangerous than to leave it in her chamber. That set me to hunting for hairs on the rug and carpet. I found these. The devil always leaves a gapway open."

"What about them?" Chick questioned, a bit perplexedly.

"Use my lens," said Nick. "Observe that they are exceedingly dry, having none of the oily gloss and pliability of hairs fresh from one's head. Notice, also, the tiny speck on the end of the longest one. It looks like the root of the hair."

"I see."

"But it is not," Nick quickly added. "It is much too hard and brittle."

"What do you make of it?"

"Instead of a root, Chick, it's a speck of glue."

"By Jove, that is significant," Chick muttered. "In that case, then, Pauline Perrot probably wears a wig."

"Gee! it's a cinch," declared Patsy, from the opposite side of the table.

"Have you other reasons for thinking so, Nick?" Chick questioned.

"Yes."

"Namely?"

"Notice these undergarments and stockings," said Nick. "All of them are new, or very nearly so. I am convinced that none of them have been worn."

"Why are you so sure of it?"

"Here are Pauline's button boots," Nick went on. "Compare the size with the size of the stockings. The stockings are two sizes larger than the boots. Who ever heard of a girl buying hosiery larger than her shoes?"

"By Jove, you are right," said Chick, carefully inspecting both.

"It was a mistake she made—another devil's gapway."

"And you infer from this that she has worn none of the other garments?"

"I am sure of it."

"But why, then, did she have them in her possession?"

Chick demanded, racking his brain to fathom it. "Why did she leave them in her bureau drawer?"

"She can have had only one logical reason, Chick, consistent with all of the other circumstances," Nick replied. "She did not buy them to wear. Though she wore feminine outside garments, she preferred another kind next to her evil skin. She left these in her bureau, Chick, only that persons having occasion to seek her, or investigate her conduct, might not for a moment suspect that Pauline Perrot is—not a woman."

"Not a woman!" echoed Chick, with a gasp of surprise.

"That's what I said," Nick nodded.

"But you don't for a moment suspect her of being a man?"

"That is precisely what I suspect."

"Nonsense! Remember that she has for several months been employed as Gordon's stenographer, and that she ——"

"Wait a bit," Nick interrupted. "We quite frequently know of women masquerading as men. Take the case of Murray Hall, who for a quarter of century wore only male attire, blinding all with whom she associated, and the secret of her sex was not discovered until after she died."

"I know about that, Nick, but——"

"I know what you would say," Nick again interrupted. "But given the right type of man, Chick, the reverse subterfuge would be just as feasible—a man with an effeminate, mobile, and beardless face, a man with medium figure and consistent voice, together with the subtle art required for such an assumption. We have met just that type of man, Chick, both of us."

"I cannot recall him," Chick declared. "Whom do you mean?"

"The man of whom Wilhelmina Strickland has been living in fear since he, by this same artifice, made his escape from a prison hospital," Nick replied. "The man of whom, though unidentified when she saw him in female attire, she felt an immediate aversion and dread—that is, upon first seeing Pauline Perrot."

"H'm, I see!" Chick muttered.

"Mina Strickland's sensitive nature and feminine intuition were more keen than her eyes," Nick added. "They were far more keen than the eyes of Arthur Gordon. The man I mean, Chick, is a past master of the art of personal disguise and character assumption, and so clever and versatile a crook that for years he eluded the European police and——"

"Oh, I've got you," Chick interrupted. "You mean Mortimer Deland."

"Exactly."

"He and Pauline Perrot are one and the same."

"As sure as you're a foot high."

"This French letter, then, is a forgery?"

"Undoubtedly," said Nick. "Deland is an expert penman. We long have known that. He is wanted in Paris for forging the signature of the prefect of police, a trick by which he escaped from brief custody."

"Also the letter sent to Miss Strickland?"

"A forgery, Chick, surely."

"You may be right, by Jove, though it seems almost incredible," said Chick.

"We shall find I am right," replied the detective confidently.

"My money goes on that, chief," declared Patsy.

"But what's the game, aside from the robbery?" Chick questioned, pointing to the bloodstained articles. "What's the meaning of these?"

"That's what we must discover, as well as the present whereabouts of Deland and his confederates," said Nick. "Arthur Gordon undoubtedly is a prisoner in their clutches. He knows nothing about the robbery, nor about the case, as we now see it."

"You reason——"

"That he was in some way trapped by the supposed Pauline Perrot, and it's up to us to discover how," Nick went on. "This evidence has obviously been planted only to denote that Gordon has killed his supposed female stenographer. Deland's deeper game is, I suspect, to subsequently bleed wealthy old Rudolph Strickland out of more money, by approaching him in some crafty way with an offer to produce Gordon and positive evidence of his innocence."

"Gee whiz! that looks dead right to me," put in Patsy. "Mr. Strickland would give up handsomely for the sake of his niece and Mr. Gordon."

"Undoubtedly, under such circumstances," Nick nodded. "He would, moreover, be a very easy mark. "By the way, Chick, did you verify Beckwith's statements by talking with Dayton?"

"Yes, of course," said Chick. "He corroborated what Beckwith had told me."

"And he is the one man, the only one, who saw Gordon departing with a suit case, eh?"

"What do you make of that?" questioned Chick, noting Nick's subtle intonation.

"Another devil's gapway," Nick dryly declared. "It was thought necessary by Deland to have it appear that Gordon carried away the money and bonds in a suit case."

"Ah, I see, now."

"With that object in view, Pauline Perrot artfully detained him in his office until all others had gone. If Gordon knew nothing about this foul business, however, it is safe to say that he had no suit case when he left his office. We know that he had none when he arrived here, or Miss Strickland would have informed us."

"Holy smoke!" cried Patsy. "In that case, then, Dayton must be one of Deland's confederates."

"That's the very point, Patsy," said Nick.

"By Jove, he should be watched, then," said Chick. "There would be something in that."

"I think so, too," Nick quickly agreed. "You return to town, therefore, and try to pick him up before he leaves his office. Get on his trail by some means, if possible, and don't lose sight of him."

"Leave him to me, Nick."

"In the meantime, with Patsy to help me I have other fish to fry."

"You mean?"

"The man with a dog—Ginger."

"Henley?" questioned Chick. "Why do you suspect him?"

"First, because this evidence, if planted, was discovered so quickly after the seeming murder," said Nick, pointing to the bloodstained articles. "It's long odds that, in a genuine case of murder, it would not have been found within a few hours of the crime."

"That's true," Chick quickly admitted.

"Second, because Henley is the man who found it, and

he don't look good to me," Nick added. "He has a bad eye. Besides, he has been very careful when speaking of the discovery to attribute it to his dog, which convinces me that he fears suspicion, if he takes it upon himself."

"Gee! I thought of that," declared Patsy. "You have hit the nail on the head, chief, for fair."

"I think that these crooks, in order to expedite matters and create a general belief that Gordon has murdered Pauline Perrot, planted this evidence and probably more, and immediately started Henley with it to inform the constable, aiming to get in their work on old Mr. Strickland as soon as possible. I saw that Henley was a bit set back when he discovered my identity and that I already was at work on the case."

"I noticed that, too, chief," put in Patsy.

"Henley decided to seize the bull by the horns, however, pretending he wanted to aid me, and I think he now has something up his sleeve," Nick added. "I'm going to give him a chance to show his hand."

"How so?" Chick questioned.

"I'm not yet sure what I shall frame up. Be that as it may, Chick, you hike back to town and get after Dayton. It's dollars to fried holes that he has a hand in this game. Use your own judgment as to the best course to shape, and leave Patsy and me to tie knots in this end of the string. That's all for the present."

"Enough said, too, Nick," replied Chick, seizing his hat. "You have pulled off a clever bit of work, remarkably clever, and we're now right in line to deliver the goods. Leave Dayton to me. I'll get him."

Chick did not wait for an answer. He hurried out of the house and started for town in the taxicab.

CHAPTER VII.

HENLEY SHOWS HIS HAND.

It was, indeed, a clever bit of detective work that had enabled Nick Carter to form a theory consistent with all of the circumstances and the accumulation of evidence denoting that Arthur Gordon was guilty of the basest of treachery and the most heinous of crimes, and which would have been convincing not only to the public, but probably to all other detectives than Nick Carter himself.

He keenly realized, however, that a theory based only upon his own convictions was not enough, that absolute evidence was needed to convince others, and he was not long in hitting upon a plan by which he thought he could obtain it.

Nick hurriedly explained it to Patsy, giving him a few necessary instructions, and he then sent him to call the suspected man from the kitchen.

Henley came slouching into the library a moment later, with Ginger trailing at his heels. He had a more lowering look in his shifty eyes. He had become impatient and suspicious during his long wait. He did not fancy his having been excluded from the conference of the detectives. It smacked of distrust of him, and his resentment was manifest in his swarthy face.

Nick saw it, of course, and at once took steps to dispel it.

"Pardon me, Henley, for keeping you waiting so long," he apologized with a heartiness well calculated to be convincing. "I had no idea it would take more than a few minutes to examine these articles. Sorry to have kept you waiting."

"That's all right, Mr. Carter," growled Henley, with countenance lighting. "Time ain't wuth much to me. I reckoned you'd want a good look at them."

"I have examined them carefully, Henley."

"What d'ye think about it?"

"It looks like a bad mess, very bad," Nick said, more gravely.

"So it does," Henley nodded. "There ain't nothing to it but murder, that I can see."

"I'm inclined to agree with you," Nick replied.

"Sure thing, chief," put in Patsy. "What else can you make of it? It's dead lucky we met Mr. Henley. He sure has put us on the right track."

"And he can do still more to aid us," supplemented Nick approvingly. "I suppose, Henley, you are perfectly willing to assist us. You will be well paid for your services. I guarantee that."

"Your word's good enough for me, Mr. Carter," said Henley, consenting with a readiness denoting that his misgivings were entirely dispelled. "I'm right here to lend you a hand. Say what you want, sir, and I'll do it."

"Good enough," Nick declared. "We'll set about it at once. Find the butler, Patsy, and have him give you a pair of Gordon's shoes. I will look after those left by the girl. We'll leave these other articles until we return. I'll take the precaution, however, to lock the library door. Get Gordon's shoes and rejoin us in the car."

Patsy hastened from the room, then started upstairs to say a few encouraging words to Strickland and Wilhelmina.

"I wish to visit the spot where you found these garments, Henley, or where Ginger nosed them out, to be more correct," said Nick, taking only the pair of button boots from the table and thrusting them into his pocket.

"I'll show you," said Henley. "That won't take long."

"We will expedite matters by going in my car as far as possible," Nick added. "Bring along the dog. We may find him useful."

"He's some dog, Mr. Carter; you can bet on that."

"He looks it, Henley, no mistake. One moment while I lock this door and remove the key. Now, then, we're off."

Nick led the way out to the touring car, in which Patsy presently joined them, bringing a pair of Gordon's shoes, and in another moment they were speeding down the long driveway toward the woodland road.

"Take us to the point where we picked Henley up, Danny," Nick directed. "He then can take the ribbons and show us the way."

"You can run a quarter mile farther," said Henley. "That'll take us to the crossroad. It's rough going, then, too rough for a buzz car."

"We will walk the remaining distance, Henley, in that case," Nick replied, all the while with an air of friendliness and appreciation of his services that appeared to deceive the swarthy ruffian. "I think you said it is less than a mile from the road to the pond you mentioned."

"'Tain't more than half a mile."

"Just where did you see Gordon and the girl last evening?"

"Going through the crossroad."

"We traced them to the juncture of the two roads."

"It was a quarter mile from there that I saw them."

"Was Gordon carrying a suit case?"

"That's what," nodded Henley. "The girl had her jacket over her arm. The man had an ugly look, and they seemed to be in a fuss over something, but I couldn't hear what they said. I watched them till they turned a bend in the road, and that was the last I saw of them."

"Gordon looked threatening, did he?"

"I sure would have thought so, Mr. Carter, if he had been looking at me," Henley forcibly declared. "He looked fit to fight a dog."

If Nick Carter had wanted further evidence of Henley's complicity in the knavish game that was being played, these last statements would have convinced him of it, in view of his own discoveries and deductions. He did not betray his suspicions, but pretended to have entire confidence in the rascal, interrogating him along much the same lines until Danny brought the car to a stop at the crossroad.

Nick was the first to alight, followed by Henley and the hound, while Patsy paused to question:

"Am I to go with you, chief?"

Nick hesitated for a moment, as if he had given this matter no previous thought, and he then said abruptly:

"No, you'll not be needed. Henley and I can look over the ground and accomplish all that can be done."

"Sure we can," put in Henley, with ill-concealed eagerness.

"You return with Danny, Patsy, and keep an eye on those things in the library. There is a bare possibility that some one will try to destroy them, in case our suspicions are known."

"That's right, too," Patsy quickly agreed. "I thought you were taking a chance, chief, in leaving them there."

"You return and look after them," Nick repeated decidedly. "I'll hoof it back with Henley after making an investigation. He won't mind the tramp."

"Mind it be hanged!" cried Henley. "Tramping round these diggings is the most that I do."

"That settles it, then," said Nick. "Back into the crossroad to make a turn, Danny, and wait for us at Gordon's place."

"I've got you, chief," nodded Patsy. "We'll keep an eye on things."

Nick did not hasten his departure with Henley. He waited until Danny had turned the touring car, then watched it speed away with both of his assistants, till it vanished around a near bend in the road.

Henley stood silently watching him, with his shotgun under his arm. There was a gleam of secret satisfaction deep down in his shifty eyes, an ominous curve in his thin-lipped mouth. Both vanished instantly, however, when Nick turned and said:

"Now, Henley, it's up to you."

"I'll make good, all right," was the reply, with a covert significance the detective was quick to notice.

"Lead the way, then."

"I'll soon show you, Mr. Carter," Henley added, with the same sinister significance. "Come on, Ginger. He's some dog, Carter, some dog. Ginger can't be beat."

Nick did not reply. He followed the swarthy ruffian over the rough crossroad, stopping at intervals to study the ground, stating that he wanted to examine the footprints of the missing couple, if any could be found. He delayed frequently in this way—but with an entirely different object in view.

Twenty minutes brought them to a path through the woodland, into which Henley struck without hesitation, remarking grimly:

"They must have gone this way. It was on this side of the pond that Ginger nosed out the bloodstained togs."

"How far is the pond from here?" Nick inquired, following him.

"Not far," Henley gruffly assured him. "It's over the hill and down into the valley. There's another path on t'other side of it, leading to a road running south."

"Toward Fordham, then."

"That's what. Gordon must have known about the pond. 'Tain't very big, but it's as deep as a volcano. The devil himself couldn't raise a corpse sunk to the bottom of it. Gordon knew that, mebbe."

"Quite likely, Henley, since he evidently wanted to get rid of the girl," Nick allowed.

"That's how it looks to me. Bear off this way, sir."

Henley strode away to the left and plunged through the bushes and underbrush, Nick following, with Ginger bringing up in the rear.

Ten minutes brought them in sight of the pond, shut in on all sides by a thick belt of woods, and Nick followed his uncouth guide down to the edge of it and to the spot he was seeking, a lonely and suitable place enough for such a crime as superficially appeared to have been committed.

"Here's the spot," cried Henley, pointing to some trampled shrubs and underbrush. "There's the log where Ginger nosed out the girl's hat and jacket. They were rolled up and thrust under it, then partly covered with dirt and leaves."

"Yes, yes, I see."

"Here's blood on the bushes, and footprints in the ground and dry leaves, as if the girl put up a fight to save herself from——"

"Stop a moment," said Nick, intently viewing the evidence mentioned. "I want to compare these shoes with the imprints."

"Gordon's shoes?"

"Yes. The button boots belong to the girl. She left them in a house where she has been boarding."

"You went there after them?" questioned Henley, with sinister scrutiny.

"Yes, certainly," said Nick, without looking up. "By Jove, they correspond perfectly, Henley. There's no question about it."

Nick was comparing both pieces of footwear with several impressions found in the damp earth. There was, as he had stated, no question as to the correspondence in size and shape, which was further evidence of who had been there the previous evening.

"It looks bad, bad enough," he added, after viewing the blood-spattered bushes, the rough ground on all sides, and seeking vainly for evidence showing in which direction Gordon had departed.

"You have made no search for the girl's body, Henley, you said."

"What's the use?" Henley asked, with a growl. "A hundred to one it's at the bottom of the pond."

"Very likely," admitted Nick, with seeming uncertainty as to what course to take.

"Gordon wouldn't have waited to bury it."

"True again," Nick allowed. "If we only knew in which direction he went——"

"We can find that out easy enough," Henley interrupted, with eyes gleaming for an instant.

"How so?" asked Nick, though he had expected and been only waiting for these suggestions. "How can we contrive to trace him?"

"Leave it to Ginger."

"You mean——"

"Ginger will show you," Henley cut in. "He can trail him like breaking sticks. He's some dog, Mr. Carter, some dog. Wait a bit and I'll show you. Gimme one of Gordon's shoes."

"By Jove, that's a good idea, Henley," Nick cried, as if he had not thought of it. "He can get the scent from this, perhaps, as you suggest. I ought to have been wise to that."

"Here you, Ginger, come here," Henley growled harshly. "Come here, you rascal."

The hound bounded through the bushes and cringed at his master's feet.

Henley seized him by the scruff of the neck and held to his nostrils the shoe the detective had given him, then pointed to the larger of the imprints in the ground.

"Get after him, Ginger!" he commanded, producing a leather strap and hooking it to the dog's collar. "Follow him up! After him, Ginger, you rascal!"

The hound brightened up and appeared to know what was wanted. He began to bark, until Henley cuffed him fiercely, and then he thrust his muzzle to the ground, whining and eagerly tugging hard on the leather leash.

Henley seized his shotgun from the ground where he had placed it, crying gruffly:

"I told you, Carter. He's got the scent. Come on at my heels. Ginger'll trail him."

"By Jove, I believe you are right, Henley," Nick cried, following.

"I know I'm right. He's some dog, sir, some dog."

"Some dog, Henley, no mistake."

"Can you stick close?"

"Bet you!" said Nick, as both plunged on after the hound. "You can't go too fast for me."

"Sing out if I do."

"I'll hang on, all right. Want me to carry your gun?"

"Not much!" growled Henley. "I'm used to this 'ere business."

"Gordon evidently went round the pond, instead of back to the crossroad."

"That's so. He most likely was heading for the other road."

"It looks so, for fair."

"Ginger'll trail him. Leave it to Ginger."

The hound was plunging on all the while, with his muzzle to the ground, and was shaping a course through the woods and around the south side of the pond.

"Plainly enough, whoever planted this evidence wore the shoes Gordon had been wearing," thought Nick, tramping rapidly on behind Henley. "That's evidence enough, too, that he now is in the hands of this rascal's confederates. It would be like Mortimer Deland not to overlook a point as essential as that. Where will the trail end? That's the question."

It then was, in fact, almost the only important question in Nick Carter's mind. He felt that he had a correct answer for all of the others. He was not left long in uncertainty, however, for the trail was not a very long one.

Ten minutes brought them to a narrow road on the south side of the pond, though a quarter mile from it, and the hound started off to the left without a moment's hesitation.

Another eighth of a mile brought them to what evidently was an extensive private estate. There were low walls through the woods, and away off to the right could be seen at intervals, when the trees and foliage did not hide them, the white stones and monuments of a distant cemetery.

"Whose place is this, Henley?" Nick inquired, while both scrambled over a low wall over which the hound had leaped. "Do you know who owns this estate?"

"Sure I know," growled Henley, over his shoulder. "I know every place in these parts."

"Whose is it?"

"It's owned by a man named Barker, Colonel Morgan Barker, but he's in Europe with his family. The house hasn't been open for a year."

Nick remembered the man and the place, also the Barker tomb, in which Mortimer Deland had temporarily concealed the art treasures stolen from Rudolph Strickland's flat in Fifth Avenue, and from which gruesome confinement Nick had rescued Patsy Garvan on the night of the round-up.

No additional evidence was needed to convince him that he had hit the nail on the head, that Pauline Perrot and Mortimer Deland were one and the same, and that this notorious European crook was back of the knavery then in progress.

"It's dollars to doughnuts, now, that the rascal has taken secret possession of Barker's unoccupied house," Nick said to himself. "It's the old Barker homestead, and sufficiently isolated to serve Deland admirably for such a job. He knew all about it, too, and that he would ordinarily be safe from intruders. I'll butt in on him, now, in a way he'll not fancy."

The last scarce had crossed Nick's mind when they emerged into the cleared land back of the large old country house, stable, and outbuildings.

Ginger was still tugging on the leash and leading the way between the buildings and toward the rear of the fine old dwelling.

Not a word now came from Henley.

Nick glanced sharply at the house while they approached it. Shutters protected all of the lower windows. The curtains at those on the upper floors were closely drawn. The surrounding grounds, an eighth of a mile from the nearest road, shut in by the trees of an extensive park, were entirely deserted and running to rank grass and weeds.

When within ten yards of the rear door, toward which the hound was heading, Nick said abruptly:

"Stop a moment, Henley. If our man is here——"

"He's here, Carter, all right," Henley cut in gruffly.

He swung round while he spoke and dropped the leash, then threw his shotgun into the hollow of his arm, instantly covering the detective.

"He's here, Carter," he added, with sinister significance. "Don't you reach for a gun. Don't move, blast you, or I'll pepper you so with buckshot that you'll look like a sieve."

CHAPTER VIII.

FACE TO FACE.

Nick Carter's feelings upon seeing the sudden display of animosity by Pete Henley were not manifest in his face. He gazed at the swarthy ruffian with hardly a change of countenance, apparently indifferent to the double-barreled gun with which he was covered.

"What's the joke, Henley?" he asked coolly.

The ruffian had murder in his eyes, and looked as black and threatening as a thundercloud.

"You're the joke, Carter, if there's any joke to it," he replied, with a snarl. "You've barked up the wrong tree and tackled the wrong bunch. Stick up your hands, and be quick about it."

"Certainly, Henley, since you insist so politely," Nick rejoined, raising his hands as high as his head.

"Keep them there, now."

"But you might answer my question, at least, and explain this sudden change of attitude on your part."

"You'll know soon enough," was the reply, followed by a short, sharp whistle.

Ginger did not respond to it. He had disappeared around a corner of the house.

Instead, the back door was quickly opened and two roughly clad men appeared on the threshold, both still under thirty. One of them instantly darted back through the hall, and Nick heard him shout to another in one of the adjoining rooms.

Henley, meantime, growled harshly, with his evil eyes constantly on the detective:

"Come out here, Foster, and get behind the dick. Feel under his coat and get his guns. Kneel down while doing it, so I'll not hit you. I'll plug him, all right, if he moves a finger."

"There will be no occasion, Henley, you rat," Nick now said sternly. "I value a whole skin too highly to take any chance against that blunderbuss in such hands as yours. I see, now, that you have served me a scurvy trick. Go as far as you like."

"You don't need to tell me that," snapped Henley. "I'm on the way. Got 'em, Bill?"

"Both of 'em, Jim," returned Foster, who had hurriedly disarmed the detective and was threatening him with his two weapons. "Who is he?"

"Nick Carter."

"Thunder! Where did you run up against him? If he——"

"You're to bring him in, Jim," cut in the man who had briefly vanished, and now returned to the open door. "His jags says——"

"Is he out here, Brigham?" Henley interrupted, with countenance clearing.

"Sure. Been here ten minutes."

"That's more like it," cried Henley. "He can now take the ribbons. Get a move on, Carter, and—stop a bit!"

Nick halted.

"Feel again, Foster, and fish out his irons. Snap them on his own wrists, hands behind him, as he will on ours if he gets a chance."

"You've told the truth once, Henley, at least," Nick put in dryly.

"But you'll never get the chance," Henley retorted. "Dukes down and behind you, Carter, or I'll pull the trigger."

"Don't trouble yourself," said Nick, obeying. "Point the gun another way. It might go off by chance."

Henley heard the snap of handcuffs around Nick's wrists and saw Foster straighten up after having secured him, and he then lowered the shotgun and grinned maliciously.

"You thought you were the real thing, didn't you, Carter?" he demanded. "Get a move on and I'll show you what you're up against and where you stand."

"I can guess."

"Into the shack, and no funny business, mind you, or you'll hear something drop, if you live until you hit the floor. Lead the way, Brigham. Where's his jags?"

"In the dining room, Jim."

"Head that way. Plug along, Carter, where he leads."

Nick felt the prod of the ruffian's gun in the small of his back, but he had no intention of offering any objection. He followed Brigham into the house, a stocky, ill-favored fellow with fiery-red hair, and in another moment he heard the door closed and locked behind him.

The hall was dim when the sunlight was thus excluded. It ran straight through the spacious old colonial house to the front door. A broad, but angular stairway led up to the second floor. There was a damp and musty smell in the long-closed dwelling, and the rooms on each side of the broad hall looked dusty, gloomy, and deserted.

The exception, in the last respect, was the large dining room into which the detective was conducted by the three crooks.

That room contained only one occupant, however; the man in search of whom Chick Carter had left the Gordon residence more than an hour before—Mr. Edgar Hereford Dayton.

He was seated in one of the leather upholstered chairs, pushed back from the polished table. He did not appear disturbed by what had occurred or by the advent of the detective upon the scene, though he gazed at Nick curiously when he entered, flecking the ashes from the end of a cigarette.

His overcoat and hat were lying on a chair near the wall, and near it stood a closed leather suit case.

Nick Carter identified him instantly as Dayton—and somewhat more than that when he spoke.

Henley was the first to open fire, however, addressing Dayton and saying gruffly, the moment he entered:

"You'd better clean out that town office, old sport, or fight shy from it now on. I reckon this dick has sent his right bower to keep an eye on it. Leastwise, I don't see where else he would have sent him in such a rush."

Nick suppressed a smile. It amused him to find that Henley was a bit more discerning than he had thought him.

Dayton appeared unmoved by Henley's announcement and advice. He glanced at the suit case mentioned, then responded with a curious mingling of coolness and assurance that Nick was quick to remember:

"He is welcome, Henley, to inspect that office. It already is cleaned out of all that would interest him. Suppose, instead of giving me needless advice, you tell me just what this meddlesome fellow is after, and what he has been doing."

"By Jove, I'm not mistaken," was the thought then in

Nick's mind. "This rascal has even more strings to his bow than I suspected."

"That's quickly told——" Henley began to reply.

"But better told first hand," Nick cut in curtly, with his gaze intently fixed on the man he addressed. "I'll give you the information you want. I'll tell you what I'm after and what I've been doing."

"Ah!" Dayton spoke with an icy drawl. "Better first hand, indeed, as you say. I do not yet place you, however, nor——"

"Oh, a truce to subterfuge," Nick again interrupted curtly.

"Subterfuge?"

"You know me perfectly well—but not better than I know you."

"Indeed?"

"You place me, all right, as I sooner or later will again place you where you belong," Nick went on sternly, disregarding the other's queries. "A wig, a beard, a reverse curve of the eyebrows, a more florid skin, an altered voice—it takes more than those to blind me, though you might get by others. Fly your true colors, Mr. Mortimer Deland, and I'll tell you what I am after and what I've been doing."

"Ah! That is a great inducement, so great that I find myself utterly unable to resist it."

Deland replied with unruffled composure. He drew up a little in his chair, gazed steadily at the detective for a moment, then raised his slender white hands to his head, deftly removing the exceedingly artistic disguise which Nick alone had been able to penetrate, and which had fairly transfigured the mobile, sinister, clean-cut, yet strangely effeminate features of—Mortimer Deland.

Jim Henley and the two frowning crooks near by evinced no surprise nor made any comments. That Deland was the master, and they merely hirelings, was perfectly apparent to the detective.

It appeared obvious, too, that Chick Carter must have arrived too late to have picked up the supposed Dayton before he left his office—a mischance that would seem to have badly aggravated the present desperate situation of the detective.

Deland appeared to think so, too, for he smiled with vicious complacency while he tossed his disguise upon the table, saying with the same frigid voice and insolent assurance which was so characteristic of him that they had at once betrayed him to the detective:

"Now, having met you halfway, Carter, and complied with the stipulation you imposed, it is up to you to perform your part of the brief verbal contract. Sit down, if you prefer; there are plenty of chairs. I regret that I cannot release you, but that would be injudicious for obvious reasons. Tell me, now, as you promised, what are you after and what have you been doing, that my good friend Henley has rounded you up in this fashion?"

CHAPTER IX.

THE ACME OF KNAVERY.

Nick Carter ignored Mortimer Deland's mocking suavity, the miscreant's manifest air of superiority and contempt. He sat down directly opposite the notorious crook, replying sternly:

"That may be quickly told, Deland, and I'm right here to tell it."

"I am listening."

"You wish to know what I am after. I am after a rascal who has been playing a very extraordinary game, so extraordinary that he might have won out and accomplished his evil designs—if I had not butted into the game to thwart it."

"Ah!" drawled Deland. "That makes it very unfortunate for him—but doubly unfortunate for you, perhaps."

"That last word is well added."

"Indeed?"

"You will agree with me later."

"I seldom agree with men of your vocation," said Deland, smiling ironically. "Be good enough to explain, Mr. Carter. I do not quite get you. For whom are you seeking?"

"For Pauline Perrot—said to have been murdered by Arthur Gordon," Nick replied curtly.

"Dear me, is that so?" smiled Deland, with eyes narrowing. "I remember Gordon. It was he who started you on my track several months ago, with very disastrous results. I would not grieve deeply, Carter, if evil did befall Mr. Arthur Gordon."

"I am very well aware of that, Deland," Nick said dryly. "Your assurance of it is entirely unnecessary."

"Pauline Perrot, eh?" queried Deland, unruffled. "Said to have been murdered. She is Gordon's stenographer, I believe. I think I have seen her coming from his business office. Murdered, eh? What are the circumstances, Carter? Have you succeeded in finding her—or what is left of her?"

"Yes," Nick said shortly.

"Dear me, is that so?"

Deland did not, in fact, then suppose it was so, Henley being the only one of the four crooks then informed of what the detective had discovered.

"I not only have found all that is left of her, but also all that she left behind her," Nick pointedly added.

Deland's eyes took on a sharper gleam and glitter, his thin lips a more sinister and threatening curve. The tinge of color in his cheeks waned perceptibly. His long, slender fingers closed involuntarily, until their carefully manicured nails bit into his palms. He laughed, nevertheless, in a cold and mirthless fashion, while he echoed inquiringly:

"All that she left behind her?"

"Exactly," said Nick.

"You mean——"

"The garments she left in the home of Mrs. Lord, with whom she has been boarding."

"You have been there?"

Deland's brows knit closer and fell to a settled frown over his steadily dilating eyes.

"How else could I have found the garments?" Nick demanded. "Yes, I have been there and——"

"And that's not the only place he's been to, nor all he——"

"One moment, Henley," Deland coldly interrupted. "I will hear you presently. Permit Mr. Carter to have his say. What more, Carter; what more?"

"Oh, there is a good deal more, Deland, if I chose to tell you all of my discoveries and deductions," Nick now said, more sternly.

"Ah, indeed?"

"So much, Deland, that it would reveal in every detail the knavish game you have been playing," Nick went

on forcibly. "But you have overplayed yourself, overestimated the value of your cards."

"My cards?"

"Have you not learned in all the years you have lived in vice and crime that three kings, well played, will invariably beat three knaves?"

"See here, Carter——"

"Oh, you wanted me to have my say," Nick went on sternly, interrupting. "The three kings you have been up against, Deland, are Patsy Garvan, Chick Carter, and myself—three kings in the detective deck. You, Deland, are single-handed the three knaves—yourself, the man Dayton, and the supposed murdered girl, Pauline Perrot. Three knaves, Deland, never beat three kings."

"You say—you say that I am Pauline Perrot?" gasped Deland, with his wonderful nerve shaken for the first time.

"I not only say so, but I can also prove it," cried Nick. "I say, too, that you now have Arthur Gordon confined in this house, and that you and these three rascals——"

"Stop!" Deland leaped to his feet. "I have heard enough from you, Carter. Keep an eye on him, Foster, with a weapon ready. If he utters another word, or makes an aggressive move, shoot him instantly. This way, Henley, into the hall. I prefer to hear your story."

An expression of devilish ferocity now had settled upon his vicious white face. He strode into the hall, Henley following, and for several minutes the two remained there in a whispered discussion.

Nick Carter waited with apparent indifference.

"There soon will be something doing, I imagine," he said to himself. "I wonder whether Chick arrived in time to pick up his quarry. That now appears very improbable. Fortunately, however, I have another string to my bow, one that Henley does not even suspect. The odds are considerable, but—ah, well, I have never known him to fail to make good."

There was a still more vicious look on Deland's face when he returned with Henley. It was like that which it had worn when, having caught Patsy Garvan as he now had cornered Nick, he left him to die in the Barker tomb.

He came and stood directly in front of Nick, gazing down at him and saying, with icy severity:

"Henley has made it perfectly plain to me. There is no occasion for you to say more."

"Very well," Nick returned indifferently.

"You are very clever, Carter, very clever," Deland went on. "I have never in Europe encountered an inspector who compared at all with you. You are so dangerous, Carter, that the world is too small for both of us."

"Why don't you move out?" Nick coolly inquired.

"You have exposed my game, indeed, and thwarted part of it," Deland went on, as if there had been no interruption. "But I have, at least, the money and bonds stolen from Gordon's vault. They are in yonder suit case."

"Thanks for the information," Nick again put in. "It will save me from searching for them."

"I also have Gordon, here, as you have inferred," continued Deland icily. "And, best of all—I have you!"

"I would be foolish to deny it," Nick dryly allowed.

"And here, Carter, before we bolt for parts unknown, is where I shall get even with you and with him, where I will forever wipe you out of my path. Gordon is bound hand and foot in a room on the top floor."

"Thanks again, Deland."

"I will send you both to the devil."

"By what route, pray?"

"In a chariot of fire!" cried Deland, with a sudden outburst of ferocity.

"Well, well, that will beat walking," Nick declared, not in the least daunted by the significance of the miscreant's threat.

Deland swung around to Foster and Gribham, who had stood listening with stoical indifference to the foregoing colloquy.

"Go and get him, you two," he fiercely commanded. "Bring Gordon down here. We will wipe them out together. We will leave no evidence here to tell the story. We will bind both, lock them in the library closet, and then fire the house."

"That's the stuff!" Henley said, with a growl. "It will burn like tinder. That will finish them."

"Get Gordon—get Gordon!" Deland fairly shrieked. "Bring him to the library. We can be out of here with our plunder, with the deed done, in less than a dozen minutes. Go and get Gordon. Bring Carter after me, Henley. Bring him into the library. I'll do it—I long to do it! It shall be my hand that starts the flames!"

In another moment all of them, Nick Carter included, were striding into the dimly lighted hall.

CHAPTER X.

THE OTHER STRINGS.

Patsy Garvan did not ride far with Danny Maloney after their parting from Nick Carter and Henley. Glancing back over his shoulder, Patsy waited only until they had rounded the curve in the road, when he called quickly:

"Slow down, Danny, and drop me. "We're out of sight."

Danny obeyed at once, saying regretfully:

"Gee! I wish I was going with you. I might be needed."

"One is better than two," Patsy replied, leaping down to the road. "There's only half the risk of being seen. I can fill the bill, all right, single-handed."

"So long, then, and good luck."

"Same to you."

Danny sped on with the car.

Patsy Garvan, however, plunged into the woods, at once shaping a course that would bring him in sight of the crossroad through which Nick and Henley were to pass.

It was to enable Patsy to make this detour that Nick repeatedly stopped on the road, pretending he wanted to find footprints left by the missing couple.

Patsy accomplished the move with no great difficulty, and entirely unsuspected by Henley, owing to the artful attitude toward him that Nick had assumed.

Patsy saw them pass along the road; in fact, saw them on the edge of the pond, and then he followed them at a discreet distance until, from behind one of the outbuildings, he saw Nick held up by Henley and afterward taken into the house.

"Gee! that does settle it," he said to himself. "I must know who is there and what's going to come off, but it won't do for me to approach the house from this side.

Those rats are in the rear rooms, or a side one, or they could not have reached the back door so quickly after Henley whistled. I'll make a circuit to the front road and have a look."

It took Patsy several minutes to do so, seeking the shelter of a wall over which he could plainly see the front of the dwelling, and he then met with an agreeable surprise.

A familiar whistle fell upon his ears, and he turned and discovered Chick under the same wall.

"Gee whiz!" he exclaimed, when they met. "This is dead lucky, for fair."

"It's not all luck, I guess," Chick replied. "Give the chief the credit for it."

"You found your man?"

"I arrived just in time to see him leaving his office."

"He must be out here, now, since you are here."

"That's what," Chick nodded. "He went round to the back door of the house about ten minutes ago. I've been waiting and watching till I could get a line on what's going on in there."

"Gee! I can supply that line, all right," chuckled Patsy.

"Cut loose, then," said Chick.

Patsy informed him with very few words what had occurred, and the subterfuge Nick had employed.

"It now is up to us, Chick," he added. "The gang we want is in that house, and probably Arthur Gordon. We must go in and get them. There's nothing else to it."

"Only one thing," corrected Chick, who again was sizing up the house.

"What's that?"

"The way to get in, Patsy, so as to catch them hands down. It's a hundred to one that they are on the ground floor, also in one of the rear rooms, as you have said."

"It's a safe gamble, Chick, in my opinion."

"And I am equally sure that we could not force any of the lower windows without being heard. We can take a chance and approach the front of the house, and by climbing that trellis at the east end of the veranda, we can reach the veranda roof and three of the second-floor windows."

"Like breaking sticks," nodded Patsy approvingly. "It's dollars to doughnuts that we then can quietly force one of the windows."

"I think so, too."

"Well, what do you say?"

"I say do it, Patsy, and be quick about it," Chick declared, when unable to discover a sign of any person in the front part of the house.

"I'm with you," Patsy muttered. "Head straight across the lawn to the east end of the veranda."

They vaulted the wall while he was speaking, then covered the distance at record speed. After waiting and listening for a few moments, they felt sure that they had not been seen. To climb the trellis and reach the veranda roof then was child's play, and both then began an inspection of the curtained windows.

Chick found one through which he could work his knife blade, thrusting up between the sashes, and in a very few moments he had succeeded in throwing the lock.

Noiselessly raising the lower section, he then pushed aside the curtain and peered in, finding that the window opened into the hall on the second floor. Listening, he could faintly hear voices from below, but could not distinguish whose, nor what was said.

"Come on, Patsy," he whispered, with a significant glance at him. "Have a gun ready. I'll lead the way."

"You won't be far in advance," muttered Patsy dryly.

Crawling quietly through the window, one after the other, they tiptoed toward the broad, angular stairway leading to the lower hall.

"Keep on, old top," whispered Patsy, now with a revolver in each hand. "The sooner we get them the better."

"I think so, too."

"They're in one of the side rooms. Ah, that was the chief's voice."

"Come on," Chick muttered, starting down the stairs.

Patsy followed close at his companion's heels.

They had made only the first turn in the stairway, when the voice of Mortimer Deland, rising high with the last threatening words he was addressing to Nick Carter, coupled with his fierce commands to his three confederates, fell loud and clear on the two detective's ears.

Chick Carter glanced at Patsy and pulled out a second revolver.

"Fire the house, will he?" he whispered hurriedly. "There'll be firing of another kind done here, if necessar."

"You bet!" nodded Patsy, with brows knitting.

"Shoot to kill, if you have to shoot."

"Kill goes!"

"They'll come out this way," Chick said hurriedly, as they reached the foot of the stairway and paused for an instant near the front door.

"Had we better rush in on them?"

"We might meet them on the threshold and get into too close quarters," said Chick, after an instant's thought. "We'd better get them after they come into the hall."

"I guess you're right."

"Slip across into that front parlor and be ready to nail them from that side," Chick directed. "I'll cover this part of the hall."

"I've got you," Patsy nodded. "Give a yell when you're ready."

He darted across the hall with the last and into the dim, luxuriously furnished parlor.

Chick crouched back of the rise of the stairs.

Both scarce had gained these positions when the four crooks, with Nick in their midst, issued from the dining room and headed toward the front of the hall.

Chick waited until they were midway between the several doors, that no swift leap into either room should save any of them. Then he uttered the yell for which Patsy Garvan was waiting.

"Now, Patsy, get them!"

Nick Carter heard him, and then saw both. As quick as a flash, he shouldered both Deland and Henley to the middle of the hall, then leaped quickly back into the dining room, out of range of a chance bullet.

Chick saw the idea, and a shriek instantly followed his yell.

"Hands up, you fellows! We'll drop the first man who resists!"

"Every man!" roared Patsy, with both guns leveled.

There were four weapons covering the crooks, with bullets enough in all to have riddled them.

Only one of them acted under the impulse of desperation—Jim Henley.

His shotgun, with which he had been prodding Nick in the back, leaped to the hollow of his arm.

Bang!

It was Chick's revolver that barked. The shotgun fell to the floor, and Henley with it, shot through the head.

Nothing more sanguinary and determined was needed. Deland and his other two confederates instantly threw up their hands—and kept them up till Patsy and Nick Carter were ready to fit them with bracelets.

That ended the sensational features of the extraordinary case. Henley died within an hour, and two hours saw the other three in the Tombs, two to be convicted and sentenced a fortnight later, and Mortimer Deland to return to finish his unexpired term in the State's prison.

Arthur Gordon was found, as stated, bound hand and foot in an upper room of the old house. Though intensely grateful to the Carters for his rescue and liberation, he was a thousand times more surprised at what they told him. Up to that moment he had not dreamed of the true identity of Pauline Perrot, who had, as Nick had inferred, artfully wheedled him into meeting her on a supposed business matter with a friend that evening, only to throw him into the hands of Henley, Foster, and Brigham.

The gratitude of Mr. Rudolph Strickland, and the joy and relief of Wilhelmina, when Gordon was brought home safely and the truth made known, were all that the most vivid imagination could picture. Their reward to Nick and his assistants, too, was in corresponding proportion.

It afterward appeared, too, that all of Nick's suspicions and deductions were absolutely correct; and that Deland, in assuming the character of Dayton, had done so only to have a quick refuge from Gordon's office, if it became necessary, and a character in which he could bury Pauline Perrot at a moment's notice.

Nick Carter had thwarted him completely, however, and had secured him temporarily, at least.

THE END.

"Blood Will Tell; or, Nick Carter's Play in Politics," will be the title of the long, complete story which you will find in the next issue, No. 156, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out September 4th. In this narrative you will read of the final round-up of Mortimer Deland. You will also find the usual installment of the serial now running in this publication, together with several interesting articles.

DEMONSTRATED.

It was a saying of a wise man that we have one mouth and two ears in order that we may listen twice as much as we speak.

A teacher once quoted this remark to his pupils, and not long afterward, to see how well the instruction was remembered, asked:

"Why is it that we have two ears and only one mouth, Brown?"

Brown had forgotten the philosopher's explanation, but thought the question not a very hard one.

"Because," he said, "we should not have room in our face for two mouths, and we should look too crooked if we had only one ear."

"No, no," said the master, "that is not the reason. You know, don't you, Smith?"

"Yes, sir," answered that hopeful. "So that what we hear may go in at one ear and out at the other."

SNAPSHOT ARTILLERY.

By BERTRAM LEBHAR.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 153 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER VIII.

MELBA GALE.

"Guess I'll borrow your motor cycle, old man, if you don't object," said Hawley to his host.

"What! You don't mean to say you're going to Oldham again?" the latter protested. "How about your doctor's orders to keep quiet and avoid all excitement?"

"I shall try to avoid excitement as much as possible while I'm in town," the Camera Chap replied dryly. "But I've got to go this time. When duty calls, physician's orders don't count, you know. Here's the telegram, old man. You can see for yourself that it's really a case of must."

His host perused the telegram and shook his head disapprovingly. "I can't say I think much of a boss who won't leave a man alone during his vacation—especially when that man has been ordered by his physician to keep his thoughts away from business. This managing editor of yours must be a peach, Hawley."

The Camera Chap laughed. "Oh, Paxton is all right. There isn't a whiter man in the newspaper game. The *Sentinel* must need that picture badly, or you can be sure they wouldn't have bothered me with it. May I have the motor cycle?"

"Of course, if you are determined to go. But if I were in your place, I'd send them back a telegram that they'd have to get another man to do the job. Seems to me that they could have got the picture just as easily by wiring to a local photographer and leaving you alone. Surely anybody can take a picture of a building. No particular skill required for that."

Hawley smiled grimly. "Some buildings are harder to take than others. I've a sort of an idea that this snapshot of the city hall is going to be one of my masterpieces. I'm eager to get at it."

His host shrugged his shoulders. "I can't see why the job should appeal to you so greatly. I thought you liked snapshots which involved risk. Surely there isn't anything particularly thrilling about taking a picture of a building."

Perhaps it is needless to say that the Camera Chap's host was not aware of the new anticamera bill which the Oldham council had recently enacted. Hawley did not enlighten him.

Five minutes later, just as the Camera Chap was about to start, his friend made an astonishing discovery.

"Why, you absent-minded beggar!" he exclaimed laughingly. "You're actually going off without your camera.

Don't expect to be able to take a picture without it, do you?"

The Camera Chap grinned. "I'm leaving it behind purposely," he said. "No use taking my big camera for this job. I've got a kodak in my coat pocket, and that'll serve the purpose just as well—better, in fact, for this particular snapshot."

Of course, Hawley would have preferred to have taken his larger camera with him, but he realized that it would have been sheer folly to have attempted to photograph the city hall with anything larger than a kodak. With six months in prison staring him in the face, he had to be content with a smaller picture.

The pocket camera, however, had an excellent lens, and, of its class, was the very finest instrument obtainable. The Camera Chap always carried it with him so as to be prepared for such emergencies as this. On many occasions in his eventful career it had enabled him to turn defeat into victory after he had been foiled in his attempts to use his more conspicuous apparatus.

"It really is kind of odd that Paxton should have given me this assignment," Hawley mused, as he motored down the steep mountain road which led to Oldham. "He was so emphatic in urging me to obey my physician's orders to forget that there was such a thing in the world as a camera. When I gave him my telegraph address and told him not to hesitate to send for me in case I was needed, he replied that he wouldn't think of doing so unless the entire city of New York was burning and there wasn't anybody else to photograph the conflagration. Paxton always means what he says, too. Funny that he should have sent me this telegram.

"But, then," he added, anxious to make excuses for his managing editor, "I suppose he figured that this was such an easy assignment that it couldn't do me any harm. Of course, he doesn't know about this new anti-camera law. If he had known of it, no doubt he would have preferred to go without the picture of the city hall rather than have asked me to run the risk of going to jail."

The Camera Chap had traveled two-thirds of the distance to Oldham, when suddenly, as he approached a bend in the road, there came to his ears a sound which caused him to put on more speed, in spite of the fact that the motor cycle was already going at a rate which the steep down grade and the unevenness of the road rendered somewhat dangerous.

It was a scream which caused him thus to risk his neck—the piercing, startled cry of a woman. It appeared to come from just beyond where the road turned.

Rounding the curve without taking the precaution of slowing down, Hawley came in sight of an automobile—a small runabout—standing in the roadway. At the steering wheel of this machine sat a girl who was cowering in terror from a ragged, rough-looking fellow of the hobo type, who stood on the running board.

The Camera Chap took in the situation at a glance. Evidently the runabout had broken down, and the tramp, seeing that it was stalled on this lonely country road, and that its sole occupant was a girl, had not hesitated to annoy her.

The noise of the approaching motor cycle was warning enough for the ruffian. Before Hawley could get to him, he had jumped from the step of the car and dashed through the thick brush which lined the roadway.

The Camera Chap applied his brakes and brought his motor to a stop alongside the car. Then, with a reassuring word to the girl, he jumped from his wheel and went in pursuit of her annoyer.

But the bushes were so thick at this point that the slight start the fellow had was sufficient to enable him to get away. Hawley went crashing and floundering through the brush for some time in the hope of hitting the trail of the fugitive, but finally had to give it up as useless.

"I'm afraid I've lost him," he said, somewhat crestfallen, as he returned to the girl in the automobile. "I don't suppose he can have gone very far, but these bushes are worse than a maze at a county fair."

"It's no matter," said the girl, with a smile. She seemed to have recovered a great deal of her lost composure. "I'm just as pleased that you didn't catch him. I really don't think the fellow meant any harm. He asked for money. The reason I screamed was because he looked so rough. The road here is so lonely that I lost my nerve when he came through the bushes and climbed onto the car. I suppose if I'd given him a few cents he'd have gone away quietly enough. I'm afraid I'm rather silly to be scared so easily."

"Not at all," said the Camera Chap. "I guess anybody would have been scared under the circumstances. What's the matter with the car; a breakdown?"

"Oh, no," the girl replied. "There's nothing the matter with the car. I stopped merely because I—I was waiting for somebody whom I expect to meet here."

Her hesitation and the vivid blush which accompanied these words enlightened Hawley as to the gender of this somebody for whom she was waiting.

She was an exceedingly attractive girl, and Hawley found himself envying the man whom she expected to meet. But as she had no desire to intrude upon this tryst, he stepped over to his motor cycle, and turned to the girl inquiringly.

"Guess I'll be getting along," he said, "unless, of course, you prefer to have me remain until the arrival of this—er—person you're expecting. Are you afraid to be left alone here?"

"Oh, no," she answered, in a tone which told him of her eagerness to get rid of him. "I'll be all right, thank you. Please don't let me detain you. I don't intend to stay here. I'm going to turn the car around and ride slowly back toward Oldham until I meet—the friend I'm expecting."

"That's a very sensible idea," Hawley said. "While the machine is in motion you'll be in no danger of annoyance from any more tramps."

He doffed his cap, and was just starting the motor of his cycle when the girl called to him.

"I quite forgot to thank you for your timely assistance," she said, giving him a gracious smile, which did a lot to atone for her evident anxiety to have him depart. "I assure you that I am very grateful.

"I live in Oldham," she went on. "If you would care to call on us, I am sure my uncle, with whom I live, would be glad of the opportunity to add his thanks to mine. My name is Melba Gale, and——"

"Gale!" the Camera Chap repeated, speaking more to himself than to the girl. "That must be merely a coincidence, of course. Surely you are no relative of Gale, of the *News?*"

"Do you mean the New York *Daily News?*" the girl inquired, some astonishment in her tone. "I have a cousin who for several years has been a reporter on that paper. It is with his family that I am living. I am an orphan, and my Uncle Delancey's house has been my home ever since I was three years old. Do you know my cousin?" she asked, looking at him keenly.

"I have met him," the Camera Chap replied evasively. "In New York?"

"Yes."

"Then, perhaps you can tell me," the girl began. Then she broke off suddenly as, glancing over her shoulder, she caught sight of a young man mounted on a bicycle who was approaching from the direction of Oldham.

It needed only one glance at her flushed, radiant face to tell Hawley that this was the lucky man who was expected.

The Camera Chap would scarcely have been human if he had been able to refrain from staring at the latter. Naturally, he was curious to see what the fellow looked like.

And, as the bicyclist drew near, Hawley experienced another great surprise.

This young man who was hastening to meet Miss Melba Gale, niece of the proprietor of the Oldham *Daily Chronicle*, was no stranger to him.

It was his friend, Fred Carroll, proprietor of the *Chronicle's* bitter rival, the Oldham *Daily Bulletin*.

CHAPTER IX.

TIMELY WARNING.

"Hello, Frank!" exclaimed Carroll, in an astonished tone as he jumped from his wheel. "I certainly didn't expect to find you here."

"I am equally surprised to see you, old man," the Camera Chap replied dryly. Then he added, a twinkle in his eye: "I didn't know you were in the habit of going bicycle riding during office hours."

"I don't make a habit of it," Carroll returned, with a guilty grin. "The fact is—— Why, hang it all, Hawley, you infernal old busybody! What business is it of yours, anyway?"

As the Camera Chap's name was mentioned, the girl's brown eyes opened wide with surprise, and she uttered a faint exclamation; but neither of the young men heard it.

"It's none of my business at all, old scout," Hawley admitted, laughing. "And, moreover, I'm going to make myself scarce immediately. I've got a hunch that this is one of those cases where two is company and three is a tremendously big crowd. Besides, I have a pressing engagement in town and have got to get a move on."

"Wait just one minute, please," cried Miss Gale, as the Camera Chap was mounting his motor cycle. "Fred, is this Mr. Hawley, the New York *Sentinel's* camera man? Because, if so, I am just in time."

"Just in time for what, Melba?" inquired Carroll, while the Camera Chap stared at her wonderingly.

"To prevent him from going to Oldham," the girl answered. "It was solely on his account, Fred, that I sent you that note asking you to meet me here. I wanted to tell you to warn Mr. Hawley of the trap which had been set for him."

"The trap!" exclaimed Hawley and Carroll in chorus.

"Yes," said the girl. Then, turning to the Camera Chap, she exclaimed tensely: "You spoke just now of having a pressing engagement in town, Mr. Hawley. Isn't it your intention to take a photograph of the city hall?"

"It is," Hawley replied. "I am on my way to get that picture now. But how in the name of all that's wonderful, Miss Gale, do you happen to know about my assignment?"

Instead of answering his question, the girl asked him another.

"You received a telegram to-day, did you not?" she said. "A telegram supposed to have come from the managing editor of the New York *Sentinel?*"

"Supposed to have come from the managing editor!" Hawley repeated, a suspicion of the truth suddenly dawning upon him. "Do you mean to say, Miss Gale, that ——"

"I mean to say that that telegram was a fake," she declared, without waiting for him to finish. "It didn't come from New York. It didn't come over the wire at all. It was composed and written by my cousin on one of the typewriters in the *Chronicle* office. It was part of the trap which my cousin and the chief of police have set for you, Mr. Hawley."

"I see," said the Camera Chap quietly. "Their scheme, of course, was to lure me to Oldham to take that picture, and then have me sent to jail for six months for violating the new law. Clever little plan. And it came pretty near succeeding, too. I had no suspicion that the telegram wasn't genuine. If you hadn't warned me, Miss Gale, I should surely have walked right into the trap. I can scarcely find words to thank you enough."

"How did you manage to find out about it, Melba?" Carroll inquired, with a fond glance at the girl.

"Chief Hodgins was at our house last night," she replied, "and I overheard him and my cousin discussing the plan. They didn't know that I was listening, of course; but I managed to overhear enough to enable me to understand what they intended to do. The chief expressed doubts as to whether the scheme would work. He said that Mr. Hawley would probably hear about the new anti-camera law, and would not be so foolish as to run the risk of going to jail. But my cousin said that he was confident that the telegram would do the trick. He said that Mr. Hawley had never been known to balk at an assignment, and that no amount of danger could keep the rattle-brained fool—those were the words he used—from coming after that picture if he thought the *Sentinel* needed it."

Carroll looked at the Camera Chap admiringly.

"That's a mighty fine tribute to get from an enemy," he exclaimed enthusiastically. "You ought to be proud of that compliment, Hawley, old fellow."

"My cousin didn't mean it for a compliment," declared Miss Gale. "He stated it merely as a fact which would insure the success of their plan."

"That makes it all the more of a compliment," Carroll said. "Tell me, little girl, did you let those fellows know that you were wise to their game?"

"No, I didn't. My first impulse was to tell my cousin just what I thought of such a contemptible trick, and warn him that if he attempted to carry it out I should certainly interfere; but upon second thought I decided to say nothing to him. I thought it would be a better plan to notify you so that you could warn Mr. Hawley to pay no attention to that fake telegram."

"That was a much better plan," the Camera Chap declared. "I am very glad, Miss Gale, that you didn't say anything to your cousin. Had you done so, it would not have been possible for me to carry out the idea that has just occurred to me. I think I have a little surprise in store for those fellows."

"You're not contemplating taking any legal action, are you, old man?" Carroll inquired anxiously. "I suppose you could prosecute them for forgery or conspiracy, or anything of that sort. They richly deserve it, of course. But for Miss Gale's sake I hope you won't do it."

"Of course not," said Hawley indignantly. "What do you take me for, Fred? I'd be a fine specimen of humanity if I were to repay Miss Gale's kindness by trying to send one of her family to prison. And she'd have to be the chief witness for the prosecution, too; otherwise I'd have no case. Do you think I'd be capable of that? Legal action is quite out of the question, of course, under the circumstances. Besides, I don't like going to court."

"Then what is this surprise which you say you are going to give them?" Carroll inquired.

The Camera Chap chuckled. "You'll have to excuse me for not answering that question now, Fred. If I did, it would spoil the big laugh which I think I can promise you later on."

CHAPTER X.

THE PHOTOGRAPH.

Less than half an hour later, the Camera Chap entered the Invincible Garage, on Main Street, Oldham.

"I want to check my motor cycle here," he said to the man in charge. Then, taking from his pocket the small camera of expensive make with which he had intended to take the snapshot of the city hall," he added: "I'd regard it as a great favor if you'd take care of this, too, for a little while."

"Sure," assented the garage man, holding out his hand for the camera. "I suppose you want to make sure that you won't run foul of the new law, eh?" he remarked, in a jocular tone.

Hawley nodded gravely. "I don't want to take any chances," he explained. "You see, I happen to be quite a camera fiend. Whenever I run across anything worth photographing, I simply cannot resist the temptation to take a snapshot. So, as I am a peaceful, law-abiding citizen, I think it will be a wise plan for me to leave my camera in your custody. If I haven't it with me, I can't very well be tempted to break the law, can I?"

"Not very well," the garage man answered, with a broad grin. "But, say, if you're so keen on taking pictures, why don't you get a permit from the chief of police? Then you can take all the snapshots you want."

"Maybe the chief wouldn't give me a permit," the Camera Chap replied dryly.

"Sure he would," the garage man declared confidently. Hawley was a perfect stranger to him. "The law wasn't made to prevent people like yourself from taking pictures. It is true that the chief of police has full power to grant or refuse camera permits at his discretion; but anybody can get one—provided he ain't connected with the *Bulletin*."

"Why the discrimination?" the Camera Chap inquired, with seeming innocence.

"It is very evident that you're a stranger here, sir, or you wouldn't risk that question. It is generally understood that the *Bulletin* was the cause of this anti-camera law being passed. You see, there's a bitter fight going on between the *Bulletin* and the town government; and, the other day, that newspaper scored heavily by publishing a couple of snapshots of the chief of police, which made him boiling mad."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Hawley, with well-feigned astonishment. "I shouldn't think the chief would object to having his portrait published. Is he such a modest man?"

The garage man grinned again. "Nobody ever accused big Bill Hodgins of modesty that I know of. But you see, sir, these weren't ordinary portraits. Some nervy photographer—I understand it was a young camera man from a New York newspaper—sneaked into the chief's private office at police headquarters while he was taking a midday snooze and took two snapshots of him fast asleep at his desk. Those were the pictures which the *Bulletin* published on its front page. Naturally, Bill Hodgins was peeved."

"Naturally," the Camera Chap agreed. "What an outrage! Really, some of those newspaper photographers go a little too far sometimes. Under the circumstances, I don't blame the chief for refusing to grant a camera license to anybody connected with the *Bulletin*."

"No, indeed," said the garage man. "But, as I say, anybody else can get one; so, if I was you, I'd go straight to police headquarters and apply for a permit."

"Oh, I guess I won't bother," said Hawley. "I don't intend to stay in Oldham very long, so it is scarcely worth while. Just take good care of that camera of mine, will you, old man?"

The Camera Chap sauntered up Main Street until he came to a store which sold sporting goods, toys, and cameras. Entering this shop, he stepped up to the toy counter.

"I want to get a present for my little nephew," he announced to the saleswoman. "Don't know exactly what I want yet, so I'll look around a bit, if you don't mind."

It didn't take him long to make a selection from the large variety of toys displayed on the counter and shelves. Then, with his purchase in his hand, he was just about to leave the store, when, apparently, a sudden thought came to him.

"By the way, you sell cameras here, don't you?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir—at the rear of the store," the saleswoman replied.

Hawley stepped up to the photographic counter and purchased a small film camera.

"Wrap it up in good, strong paper, please," he requested the salesman. "I want to conceal the fact that I'm carrying a camera."

"Haven't taken out your license yet, eh?" said the salesman, with a smile.

"No, not yet," the Camera Chap replied.

"Well, why not drop into police headquarters right now and attend to it? Then you won't have to be afraid of getting into trouble. It'll only take you a couple of minutes."

But Hawley did not drop into police headquarters, al-

though he passed right by that building on his way to the city hall.

Chief Hodgins happened to be standing in the doorway as the Camera Chap passed. He was engaged in conversation with the younger Gale.

"I've got a feelin' that he ain't coming," the big chief remarked uneasily. "You can depend upon it that he's heard about this law and is afraid to take a chance."

"Don't worry. He'll come, all right," declared Gale confidently. "The only thing that could keep him away would be a suspicion that that telegram of ours wasn't genuine, and I'm pretty sure he won't suspect that."

Then suddenly Gale caught sight of Hawley, and poked his companion in the ribs.

"Look! Here he comes now," he whispered excitedly. "What did I tell you, chief?"

"By Jiminy! It's him, sure enough," the head of Oldham's police force muttered. "I've only seen him once—and that time I only got what you might call a fleetin' glimpse of him—but I'd know the rascal anywhere. I could pick him out of a thousand."

"Don't let him see us," Gale whispered cautiously, pulling his companion farther back into the hallway of the headquarters building. "Compose yourself, chief."

This last remark was called forth by the fact that Chief Hodgins' round face had turned scarlet, and his little, beady eyes seemed about to leave their sockets. His fat fingers opened and closed convulsively, and he fairly trembled with the fury which the sight of the Camera Chap aroused within his breast.

"I can hardly keep my hands off him," he growled.

"Don't do it, chief," Gale urged. "Go easy or you'll spoil the whole game. In a few minutes you'll have the satisfaction of marching him to jail. That'll be much better than physical violence. See, he's heading straight for the city hall; and I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that that brown paper package in his hand is a camera. He must be a bigger idiot than I thought him if he imagines he can fool us by such a bluff."

"Come on," said Hodgins impatiently. "Let's trail the loafer. I've got six of my best men stationed around the city hall, laying in wait for him. I assigned the best detectives on my force to the job, but they may fall down, and I'm not taking any chances. Come on, young feller. We'll make this pinch ourselves."

"Great!" exclaimed Gale, a gleam of malicious satisfaction in his eyes. "I'll enjoy taking an active part in the arrest, chief. I'm just as anxious as you are to see that chesty Camera Chap laugh out of the other side of his mouth. I've got several old scores to settle with him, and I wouldn't miss this opportunity for a mint of money."

They waited until Hawley was half a block ahead, then they crossed to the opposite sidewalk and followed him cautiously up Main Street, taking care to keep far enough back to prevent his recognizing them in case he should glance behind him.

But this precaution proved unnecessary, for the Camera Chap did not once turn his head in their direction. Apparently blissfully unconscious of the fact that he was being shadowed, he kept right on until he reached the white, domed building which housed the local government of Oldham.

Here he halted and carefully surveyed the edifice, shifting his position several times as though he had difficulty in making up his mind which viewpoint would best serve his purpose.

Gale and the chief of police had ducked inside the doorway of a store. From this place of concealment they watched him closely, and a grunt of joyous anticipation came from Hodgins as they saw him remove the paper wrapping of the package in his hand and reveal a film camera.

"What did I tell you!" Gale whispered exultantly. "I knew I was right about the contents of that package. In another minute or so he'll have snapshotted himself into jail."

"He's taken the picture already," growled Hodgins. "I just seen him turn that little knob at the side of his camera; and he's got the confounded thing pointed straight at the city hall. That's plenty good enough for me."

He was about to step out of the doorway, but Gale hastily pulled him back.

"Hold on, chief," he whispered, smiling at the policeman's ignorance of photography. "He hasn't taken the picture yet. He's merely focusing, and the law doesn't forbid that. Wait until he squeezes the bulb and exposes the film. Then we'll have the goods on him.

"And say, chief," he added eagerly, "let me have a few words with him before you place him under arrest, will you?"

"Huh! What do you want to say to him?" growled Hodgins suspiciously.

Gale smiled sardonically. "I just want to have a little fun at his expense, that's all. It'll be great sport to kid him. It can't possibly do any harm—there's no danger of his getting away, so please do me that favor, will you?"

The Camera Chap seemed to be having some trouble in getting a satisfactory focus. He fidgeted with his camera for several minutes before he was quite content with the reflection in the view finder. But at last he was ready to take the picture, and there was a faint clicking sound as he squeezed the bulb.

The noises of the street, of course, prevented Gale from hearing this click; but he saw Hawley's fingers compress the rubber bulb, and he knew that the psychological moment had arrived.

Stepping out from his place of concealment, he confronted the Camera Chap just as that young man was in the act of restoring his photographic apparatus to its original paper wrapping.

If Gale had loved Hawley like an only brother, his face could not have been more expressive of cordiality as he advanced toward the latter with hand outstretched.

"Well, if it isn't good old Hawley, as large as life!" he exclaimed effusively. "My dear fellow, this certainly is a pleasant surprise."

The Camera Chap looked startled. "Hello, Gale," he said nervously, apparently failing to see the other's outstretched hand. "This meeting is a surprise to me, too. But I can't stop to talk now. I'm in a big hurry. He was about to move on, but Gale detained him by clutching his coat sleeve.

"Don't be in such a rush, old fellow," he said pleasantly. "Surely you can spare a couple of minutes. There are so many things I want to say to you. In the first place, what on earth are you doing in Oldham?"

"I am taking a little vacation," Hawley replied, trying to wrench his arm free from Gale's detaining grasp.

"Is that so? That's queer. I'm taking a little vacation, too," said Gale. "My folks live in this town, you know. But say, old man, I've had a rare piece of luck. I've accidentally stumbled across a rattling good yarn which I'm going to put on the wire in a little while. The New York *Daily News* will be tickled to death to get it."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Hawley, making another ineffectual attempt to free his imprisoned coat sleeve. "But really, Gale, I must be going. I'll see you again some other time."

"Don't be in such a hurry," Gale protested. "I must say, Hawley, you're not a bit sociable to-day. I want to tell you about this story I've had the luck to pick up. It's a peach; and I think you'll be interested. It's about the arrest of a well-known New York newspaper man," he went on, with a sardonic laugh. "A fellow in your own line, Hawley. They're going to send him to jail for six months."

Never had Gale seen the Camera Chap more panic-stricken than he appeared now.

"Let me go!" he gasped. "What the deuce are you holding on to me like that for? I tell you I've got to get away. I've got an important engagement."

"Just a minute, old chap," said Gale softly, taking a tighter hold on his victim's sleeve. "I really can't let you go until I've told you how very glad I am to see you.

"By the way," he added, pointing to the camera in Hawley's hand, "I see you've been doing a little work during your vacation, too. Did you get a good picture?"

"Oh, no," Hawley replied nervously. "I didn't take a picture at all. I——"

He didn't finish the sentence; for just then some one stepped up behind him, and a big hand clutched him by the coat collar. "You lie!" a hoarse voice bellowed. "You miserable whelp, you're caught with the goods this time."

The large hand and the hoarse oath both belonged, of course, to Chief of Police Hodgins. As he grabbed the Camera Chap, the six plain-clothes men who had been lying in ambush pounced out of their various hiding places and surrounded the prisoner.

The latter smiled grimly as he glanced swiftly around at this circle of scowling faces.

"Gee whiz!" he exclaimed. "You're certainly taking no chances on my getting away, chief. If I were a murderer or a desperate bank burglar I could scarcely expect a bigger bodyguard."

"You're worse than a murderer or a bank burglar," growled Hodgins. "And you'd better keep your mouth closed, or we'll close it for you."

He snatched the camera from the prisoner's hand and snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists. He had no fear of Hawley's making his escape; but he used the handcuffs because he wished to make things as unpleasant as possible for that young man.

As they started to march their captive down Main Street, Gale, walking close beside the Camera Chap, laughed like a villain in a melodrama.

"Without exaggeration, my dear Hawley," he chuckled, "this is quite the happiest day of my life."

CHAPTER XI.

IN COURT.

It was not until two hours after the Camera Chap's arrest that his friend, Fred Carroll, learned of it.

The proprietor of the *Bulletin*, returning to his office after his tryst with Melba Gale, was just seating himself at his desk when the telephone claimed his attention. It was the voice of Parsons, his police reporter, which came to him over the wire.

"Is that you, Mr. Carroll?" said the reporter. "I've been trying to get hold of you for the past two hours. They've arrested your friend, Mr. Hawley. They're just taking him to court now."

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed the proprietor of the *Bulletin*. "What have they got him for?"

"Breaking the new anticamera law. I'm afraid he's in bad, too, sir. Looks as if they've got him dead to rights. He took a photograph on the street outside the city hall, and they caught him at it. Of course, Hodgins will make the most of this opportunity to get square."

"Suffering Cæsar!" muttered Carroll, a troubled look on his face. "What magistrate are they taking him before, Parsons?"

"Judge Wall, sir."

"Wall!" The troubled look on Carroll's face deepened. "He's the biggest grouch on the bench, and a personal friend of Hodgins. Poor old Hawley! I'm afraid they'll give him the limit. All right, Parsons, I'll be right over. We must see what we can do."

As he hurried to court, Carroll said to himself, with a frown: "The reckless chump! What the dickens did he want with that picture, when he knew that telegram was a fake? I suppose that was the big laugh he promised me. He made up his mind that he'd get that snapshot, anyway, just to show those fellows how little he was afraid of them. Unfortunately, though, it looks as if they've turned the laugh on him. I wish I'd guessed what he was going to do, so that I could have persuaded him not to take such a desperate chance."

Although Carroll lost no time in getting to the court-room, the Camera Chap was already being arraigned when he arrived there. Chief Hodgins was in such a fever of impatience to wreak his vengeance upon that young man that he had prevailed upon his honor to try the case ahead of several other less important cases which, according to the regular order, should have preceded it.

News of Hawley's arrest evidently had traveled fast, for Carroll recognized in the courtroom several men whose presence there, he felt sure, was prompted solely by a desire to see the Camera Chap sentenced to six months in the county jail.

Prominent among these was old Delancey Gale, who stood beside his son, within the railed inclosure in front of the magistrate's desk—a privilege accorded to representatives of the press—stroking his white, mutton-chop whiskers and shaking his head deprecatingly every time his gaze rested upon the prisoner's smiling countenance, as though such depravity as he saw there was almost past his comprehension.

Most of the other men in the spectators' benches were politicians—members of the ring against which the *Bulletin* was waging war. They had no grievance against Hawley personally, but they regarded his prosecution as a blow at Carroll and his newspaper, and therefore they had come there with thumbs down.

As the proprietor of the *Bulletin* entered the courtroom, he was greeted by vindictive scowls from this group. One had only to glance at their faces to realize how intensely bitter was their feeling toward this young New Yorker who had done—and was still doing—his level best to brand them as the grafters they were.

But their scowls were quickly succeeded by friendly smiles as a burly, rawboned man of middle age, whose countenance was set in grim lines, entered the courtroom close on the heels of Carroll, stepped pompously up to the bench, and took a seat beside the magistrate without waiting for an invitation to do so.

The newcomer was the Honorable Martin Henkle, mayor of Oldham, and the most powerful political boss that town had ever known.

Mayor Henkle was not in the habit of gracing the police court with his presence; but so great was his interest in this case that he had adjourned an important hearing at the city hall in order to attend the trial.

The mayor's visit was a source of great gratification to Chief Hodgins. Since the *Bulletin's* publication of those painful snapshots showing that corpulent official in a somnolent pose, there had been a marked coolness between the mayor and the head of the police department.

While the former had not carried out his threat to remove the latter from office, he had let it be plainly seen that Hodgins was in great disfavor at the city hall. Consequently the police chief was glad now to have the mayor present to witness his triumph over the Camera Chap. He felt confident that this arrest would go a long way toward restoring him to favor.

It did not take Chief Hodgins long to present his evidence against Hawley.

With a note of pride in his voice, he told the court how by his vigilance and alertness he had been successful in catching the defendant "red-handed," in the act of taking a photograph on a public highway of Oldham.

"And I hope, your honor," the chief concluded, "that you'll see fit to make an example of the rascal; for if ever there was a desperate character, he's one. Just see how he stands there grinnin' now—right in your honor's face."

His honor, who was a dyspeptic-looking little man with a peppery temper, glared at the prisoner, and inwardly resolved that he would "give him something to grin about" in a little while.

Gale and the six detectives gave testimony corroborating that of the chief of police regarding the taking of the photograph.

Everybody in the courtroom, including Fred Carroll, thought that the case against the Camera Chap was a strong one, and wondered why the latter didn't manifest more concern as to the outcome.

Hawley's face continued to wear a cheerful smile as he listened to the evidence, and this smile expanded every time his gaze rested on the camera reposing on the magistrate's desk, which Chief Hodgins had offered as an exhibit.

"You say that a photograph was taken," the magistrate suddenly remarked. "Have you the picture, chief?"

"I have the negative, your honor," Hodgins replied promptly.

As he spoke, he glanced swiftly at the Camera Chap, whose face had suddenly lost its smile, and now wore an expression of mingled indignation and amazement.

"In order to make the evidence as complete as possible, your honor," the chief of police went on, "I took the roll of film from this fellow's camera, in the presence of witnesses, and had it developed. The result was this picture of the city hall, which I now offer in evidence."

As Hodgins handed the negative to the magistrate, Hawley's gaze traveled from the incriminating strip of gelatin to the face of the younger Gale.

On that countenance he saw an expression which fully enlightened him as to who was responsible for this piece of manufactured evidence—an expression half triumphant, half anxious.

"What a chump I was not to have foreseen that he'd do that," he mused ruefully. "I guess this isn't going to be such a ripping good joke, after all. It looks very much now as if I'm going to be engaged for the next six months in the unprofitable pastime of making large stones into little ones."

TO BE CONTINUED.

ELEPHANT OFFENDERS IN THE ARMY.

In India, elephants are used for many purposes, but principally for carrying heavy loads from one part of the country to another. The Indian government employ a number of them, especially for their artillery.

These elephants are very particular about their rights. For instance, when formed up on parade, the elephant who has served longest takes the right of the rank, the others forming up in succession, according to their seniority, just like soldiers. Sometimes, either by accident or design, an elephant will take up a position to which he has no claim, when there is at once a great commotion, his comrades insisting upon his retiring to his proper place.

With such intelligent animals, it is therefore little to be wondered at that punishments for grave offenses are generally preceded by a court-martial in precisely the same manner as with soldiers.

One such scene of trial and punishment of an elephant guilty of murder is thus described by an eye witness, a military officer:

"The prisoner, with eyes filled with tears, was marched in front of us, between two other elephants. Along with them came all the witnesses. The president, Major C——, read the charge: 'Elephant Abdul is charged with causing the death of Syce Rambocules by catching him by the legs with his trunk and beating his brains out against the wall of the grain hut.'

"The first witness called deposed that he was in the line at twelve o'clock, seeing the elephants fed. When the trumpeter sounded 'feed,' he saw Syce Rambocules run with a bag of grain toward Elephant Abdul. At this time all the other elephants were fed, consequently Syce Rambocules was late in feeding Elephant Abdul. The witness ordered the syce to hurry, but the latter did not seem to move any quicker. As soon as he approached, Elephant Abdul seized him by the legs and dashed his head against the little grain hut. Eight syces gave similar statements.

"When they had finished, the president, who had kept his head down the whole time, with the elephant's defaulter sheet in front of him, suddenly looked up and glared at the prisoner. Seeing the elephant's eyes swimming in tears, he said:

"'It's no use; that game won't do. I am quite accustomed to see tears, and never take any notice of them. I see by this defaulter book that you have been guilty of no fewer than sixten crimes of injuring people, and I have not the slightest compassion for you.'

"The members of the court-martial all agreed with him, and, after a short adjournment, found Abdul guilty, and sentenced him to fifty lashes and two years' imprisonment."

A few days later the first part of the sentence was carried out.

The whole battery was drawn up in a square, fourteen elephants forming one side and the noncommissioned officers and men the other three sides. In the center were two huge elephants, the prisoner Abdul, and the senior elephant, to whom the task of inflicting punishment always falls. Besides these two elephants, all the officers of the battery, the provosts, the brigade major, and the doctor, were in the center, and elephants numbers two and three stood on either flank, in case the prisoner might try to escape. Four great iron pegs were driven into the ground, to each of which one of the prisoner's legs was chained. The senior elephant, Lalla No. 1, stood by, with a huge cable chain fastened around her trunk, waiting further orders.

When all was pronounced ready, the doctor, who stood with a watch in his hand, gave the signal to begin. Lalla raised her trunk in the air, gave it two turns, and down came the cable with terrific force on Abdul's back. A loud thud was heard, followed by an unearthy roar from the unfortunate Abdul.

Again the doctor gave the signal, and down came the cable with terrific force, causing more roaring. Again and again it came down, until the full number of lashes were given, after which the prisoner was marched back to his quarters, trembling from head to foot and having a few lumps on his back as the result of the lashing. The parade was then dismissed, and things went on as usual.

CONTINUED HIS EXPERIMENTS.

Among the adventures which befell a young engineer a short time back, was the perilous one of falling down the shaft of a mine. The shaft was not in use during the winter, but as it was essential to have it in order before spring, the young engineer determined to examine it.

There were no ladders to this particular shaft, and he elected to be lowered by the windlass. It was necessary, therefore, to hold on tightly to the rope, keeping one foot in a loop at the end. He settled himself firmly and swung off, the rope in his right hand and a candle in his left.

The shaft was about three hundred feet deep, and he was halfway down when he leaned forward to examine the wall of the shaft, and as he did so his foot shot out from the noose. It was coated with ice. The candle was jerked out of his left hand, while his right slipped down the icy rope like lightning, and closed on it with a death grip.

Then he felt himself swinging by one hand to the end of the rope and instinctively reached up to the loop with the other, only to find it a smooth coat of ice which gave scarcely any hold. He could never cling there long enough to be hauled back to the mouth of the shaft, even if he should succeed in making the men hear his cry for help.

The shaft was pitch dark, and it was therefore impossible to judge his rate of descent, as he hung—literally between life and death—with every faculty strained to the one act of clinging to the rope.

His hands were numb with cold and little by little he felt them slipping. Another moment and he went.

But not far, for when he let go he was not three feet from the bottom of the shaft. All the same he felt decidedly shaky as he groped about for his lost candle, which he found, and then coolly completed the exploration for which he had descended.

DRINK OR TEMPERANCE?

A temperance orator was describing to his audience how his own life had been influenced by total abstinence.

"You know," said he, "that I am chief of my department. Three years ago there were two men in our office who held positions superior to mine. One was dismissed through drunkenness; the other was led into crime, and is now serving a long term of imprisonment, and all through the influence of strong drink. Now, what I ask," he cried, growing eloquent, "what has raised me to my present high position?"

"Drink!" was the vociferous but unexpected reply, which he received from a number of the audience.

HE WANTED TO KNOW

His five-year-old boy was perched on his knee, and the fond father gazed at him with eyes that beamed with paternal pride.

"Papa"—pointing out of the window—"what are those men doing over there?"

"Building a house, my son."

"Why?"

"Because they are paid to do it."

"Who pays them for doing it?"

"The man who is putting the house up."

"What does he pay 'em for?"

"For building the house."

"Why?"

"Because—well, because they would not build the house if he did not pay them."

"What does the man want the house for?"

The paternal smile became rigid.

"To live in."

"Hasn't he got a house to live in?"

"Oh, yes!"

"What does he want another one for?"

"Oh, for other people to live in."

"What other people?"

"Oh, men and women and little boys and girls."

"Why do they want to live in the house?"

"Well, they must live somewhere."

"Who?"

"The people."

"What people?"

"Any people."

"Why?"

At this juncture the innocent, prattling child saw a firm hand descend, and hastily retreated in time to prevent a collision.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Interesting New Inventions.

A safety pocket to hold a watch securely is a feature of a new apron for workmen.

A device for removing tires from wagon wheels has been invented that exerts a pull exceeding a ton, yet weighs less than twenty-five pounds.

The principle of the automatic drinking fountain has been applied to a water cooler by the invention of a bubbling attachment.

Flies can enter a garbage can that a New York man has patented, but as they try to get out, they are caught in a wire trap, which can be detached and the insects destroyed.

A new clamp to hold a cover on a milk bottle also serves as a handle to carry the bottle.

Won't Cut Hair Until Bryan is President.

Bryan Wise, nineteen years old, of Crane, Mo., will get his first hair cut when William Jennings Bryant becomes president.

"Then his hair will grow so long that he will stumble over it," the thoughtful reader may surmise; but be that as it may, Bryan Wise, son of a Crane, Mo., brakeman, has for nineteen years been a total stranger to the barber's chair, and, having stood the "gaff" for so long a time, it looks as though he will continue to do so. At present his hair touches his waist when it is "undone," but he wears it in a tight knot at the back of his head.

The father of the long-haired youth was and continues to be a great admirer of the former secretary of state, and he has every faith that in the course of time his son will have the opportunity to have his hair cut off.

Ker-choo! Arm Out of Joint.

Sometimes a sneeze can do more damage than ordinarily. W. H. Wallingford, an automobile salesman of Portland, Ore., will testify to this.

Wallingford was talking to a "prospect" in an auto salesroom. During his argument in favor of the car he was selling, Wallingford raised an arm above his head and leaned it against a door casing. Then the sneeze came—and it came so suddenly Wallingford didn't have time to "get set" for it. His head and shoulders were jerked forward and downward when the ker-choo sounded, and the arm was dislocated at the shoulder socket. A physician reset it, and Wallingford, after a few days of rest, will be back on the job.

Night at Ellis Island with Wrecked Mankind.

On wire and canvas cots, on wooden benches, and not infrequently on tiled floors, hundreds of men sleep each night on Ellis Island, in New York City. These men are not immigrants, although many, but by no means most, of them are aliens. They are homeless, hungry men, who have neither work nor the wherewithal to live, a condition that is in dire contrast to the comfortable and happy existence of those who live in the small cities and towns of our land, but one that for months has been experienced by thousands of unfortunates in our metropolitan centers.

The island has been thrown open to them ungrudgingly, first because of the sympathetic understanding of Commissioner Frederic C. Howe, and, second, because the sudden fall in immigration has left unoccupied a great many rooms and hundreds of cots previously needed for those who came, as many of these men came, to the Land of Promise.

You do not have to look closely at these men to see how poorly dressed they are; but, if you were to spend a night with them, you would find that beneath their soiled and wretched outer covering there is no clothing, and that the flesh that is weak, in many cases is sore and infected and in need of care. For with them underwear long since has become a bitter memory of better days, and their feet are without socks and their boots without soles.

Now, these men are not lazy men. Let there be no misunderstanding as to that. Any one can satisfy himself on that score by announcing that he needs a man to work. He will be surrounded by a hundred men, who will not merely clamor for the job, but will actually beg for it. Some time ago twenty men were needed to cut ice. It was cold work, in cold season, but scores of men stepped forward when the call was made, and not one of them had a stitch of underclothing to his body! The employment agent who engaged the number needed supplied them with warm garments out of sheer pity for them.

Here is what Commissioner Howe has to say of them:

"The unemployed men have been coming to Ellis Island for the past five months. The numbers for the last two months have averaged between seven hundred and eight hundred each night. The men are perfectly orderly, and are most grateful for the opportunity offered them for sleeping some place other than in the parks, under the bridges, or any other such places as are open to them. They required no policing, and have not given us a bit of trouble in that time. A large percentage of them rush eagerly to the bathroom as soon as they arrive at the island. They maintain barbers and clothes menders to keep in good condition, and are, so far as I can judge, making every possible effort to retain their self-respect under terrible conditions.

"It is almost complete presumption to my mind in favor of a man if he is willing to sleep night after night on a hard wood floor, without any covering over him, and that is what many of the men have been doing. They get what little food they have as best they can, and the great majority of them are in a state of chronic hunger. It seems to me a far greater reflection upon this rich city that these men should be left wholly to their own fate than it is upon the men themselves, for they cannot create their own employment; many of them are in rags, and do not present a good appearance, and some of them are so weak and enfeebled by long exposure that they are hardly in position to help themselves."

It was to learn something of these men at first hand that a reporter, dressed as one of them, and unshaved and of sorry appearance, joined their company for one never-to-be-forgotten night on the island. But the suf-

fering and discomfort were more than made up for by the fact that, although these were rough men, in the privacy of the room in which we slept—except for some swearing—there was not spoken one word that any woman might not have heard. It is really a splendid thing to be able to say that.

These unfortunate men say they are much happier within the hospitable halls of Ellis Island than they ever could be at the municipal lodging institutions, which they criticize very unfavorably and with various reasons, among their objections being too many unnecessary questions asked, entirely too much work expected for the amount of assistance given, and many times no food at all when food is due; in other words, they pronounce organized charity, as exemplified in New York, a proved failure so far as it benefits those for whom it is supposed to be carried on.

"King of the Pasture" Chases Girl "Hikers."

If it hadn't been for a wild bull, which has the habit of seeing red, in a pasture they crossed, two Kansas schoolma'ams, Miss Edna R. Johnson and Miss Lillian Jaggar, who are hiking on foot overland from Vernon, Kan., to Pueblo, Col., would not be spending a week in Dodge City recuperating before continuing their journey.

The bull chased the two young school-teachers across a rolling pasture a half mile when they rolled to safety under a high barbed-wire fence.

Probably nothing would have occurred if the girls had not worn sweaters—red sweaters. But they did not think of angry bulls in mapping their tramp.

The bull charged up until his shoulders hit the wire, and then stopped. But his bellows urged the girls to renewed efforts, and they raced on. A farmer boy met them and offered them protection. They took it gladly.

They managed to get to Dodge City, but there they decided to remain until their shattered nerves were restored. Hereafter, the girls say, they will tramp along in the dusty road. No more pastures will entice them. They have been tramping for two weeks and had covered over three hundred miles without having ridden a foot of the way.

Youth Stops Runaway Team.

Fifteen-year-old Harold Dewey Howard, son of Mrs. Alice Howard, of Baker, Ore., checked a runaway team belonging to H. E. Jordan, seizing the animals by the bits and being dragged for nearly one hundred feet before he was shaken loose. Young Howard was slightly bruised, but he brought the horses to a standstill.

Life on Ole Mississip in Days Befo' de Wah.

There was recently held at Dubuque, Iowa, a meeting of shippers from eight Mississippi Valley States for the purpose of restoring transportation on "The Father of Waters." The cities represented by active delegates were St. Paul, Minneapolis, La Crosse, Winona, Galena, Dubuque, Burlington, Quincy, Hannibal, Rapid City, East St. Louis, New Orleans, and Cincinnati.

President Thomas Wilkinson, of Burlington, Iowa, was authorized to appoint an energetic working committee to prepare a plan or system for the practical utilization of the valley's great water highway to meet the demands of commerce occasioned by the completion of the Panama Canal and other transportation exigencies. It is said the greatest enthusiasm exists among the large producers and shippers of the valley over the prospective resumption of river traffic, and that already many encouraging offers have been received by those at the heads of the enterprise.

The floodtide of the Mississippi River traffic under the old system was reached July 4, 1870, when the *Robert E. Lee* pushed its nose against the St. Louis wharf at the conclusion of its great race with the *Natchez*. Old rivermen say that almost from that hour they could detect the falling off of the trade once so generously given the big "river palaces."

The *Lee* beat the *Natchez* into St. Louis six hours and thirty-six minutes. Both steamers cleared the New Orleans wharf at about five p. m. June 30th. The race was fairly even until they got close to St. Louis. Jesse T. Jamison and Enoch King were in the *Lee's* pilothouse. They had taken charge of the wheel at Cairo, and held their long trick clear into St. Louis.

At Devil's Island a dense fog settled on the river. There were no lighthouses then, no electric flash lights to sweep out over the river. The *Natchez* was hanging on close. Many rivermen of that day insisted that under certain conditions she was a much swifter boat than the *Lee*.

As night came on, all the world was black. "You could almost feel it," graphically observed a man who was on the *Lee*. "Jamison looked across at his mate handling the other side of the big wheel. 'We'll keep going,' he said. 'Of course,' replied King. The pilot's decision in the old river days was the law."

The *Lee* was drawing six feet. Leadsmen were out on the fo'castle all night taking soundings. The boat never stopped in all that gloom. Jamison said, many years afterward, that it was a harder ordeal on his nerves than if he had been fighting all night on a battle line. The *Natchez* tied up during the worst part of the fog, and she had good pilots, too.

The winning boat was welcomed into St. Louis by salvos of artillery at Jefferson barracks, and hundreds of steamers and tugs black with people. Some of these traveled many miles downstream to greet the victor, who easily outdistanced all of them in the run to the city. The wharf boats all along the great levee were crowded with cheering people. The event made the *Lee* the most popular boat on the river, and every member of her hard-working crew became a hero.

In a recent talk about the vanished glories of the big stream, J. G. van Cleve, a merchant of Macon, Mo., said:

"The commercial lifeblood of the city was represented in the activity along the levee. The man who has never made a trip down the Mississippi River in the real steamboat days has lost a page of life that would have contributed to his love of country.

"The big Anchor Line steamers for Grand Tower, Cairo, Memphis, and Vicksburg were scheduled to leave the St. Louis wharf at five p. m., but they rarely got under way before nine or ten. The rules seemed to be to hold the boat as long as there were offerings of freight, and it looked like the shipping clerks in the big wholesale houses on Second and Main Streets didn't begin to get busy until late in the afternoon. Then wide two-wheeled drays and trucks would clatter down the long rock levee like an army of invasion. It was a lively

sight. Officers would dart helter-skelter, directing teamsters where to go, and saying things anent their tardiness; the teamsters would swear at their mules, and the mates would cuss the roustabouts. Everybody seemed to have a safe target for his wrath, and nobody took offense. It was all a part of the game.

"By and by, long after supper, the last dray of freight would roar across the wharf bridge, an army of black men would seize the stuff almost before the team stopped, the mud valves would growl out great clouds of steam forward to the paddle wheels, and some one aloft—generally the captain—would pull the great bell for the third time. That was the signal to cast off the hawsers and run in the gang plank. Then the big craft, loaded nearly to the water's edge amidships, would slowly drift out into the river, stern foremast.

"When the line of boats was cleared, a seeming haphazard concert of small bells and baby whistles below, was responded to by long, fierce exhausts, spouting geyser-like from the steam pipes just forward of the wheelhouse. The din of the bells and whistles, which nobody on earth but the engineers could have deciphered, was kept up until the boat had slowly turned around and headed south. The long voyage had begun. Then the negro roustabouts, scattered around on coffee sacks and hemp bales, started their evening musicale:

> "'The boat comes sailin' 'round de ben',
> Good-by, my lovah, good-by;
> She's loaded down wid wimin an' men,
> Good-by, my lovah, good-by!
>
> By-by, my ba-bee,
> By-by, my ba-bee,
> Good-by, my lovah, good-by!'

"It was sung to a long, plaintive tune, carrying with it the agony of parting forever. As it rolled out into the darkness, now and then illumined by the red glare from an opened furnace, the black man seemed to have come into his kingdom; a kingdom peopled with weird shapes and enveloped in the mysticism of a dark continent. He was no longer a humdrum hewer of wood and a drawer of water, but a part of the sublimity of the great river. The steady move of the engines, the cascades from the steam pipes, and the pleasant quiver of the boat seemed the natural accompaniment of the negro's lullaby, and the whole scene was so enchanting that few passengers retired to their staterooms until late in the night.

"The boat swept on past the great Vulcan ironworks, where the blasts showed red against the houses, and gave them the appearance of a town on fire; on past 'Bloody Island,' where statesmen met to shoot holes into each other for honor's sake, and then down the broad water avenue by the mountains of iron the steamer sped, throwing behind great billows that sparkled back the lights from the rear cabin.

"Far down the stream is a light close to the shore. The pilot knows what that means. It is a wild-cat landing, where a freighter awaits with a lot of goods, or some passengers who want to take the boat. In either event somebody has probably been waiting by the riverside some six or eight hours. The pilot pulls a ring in the top of his little house, and the triple whistles above it give the peculiar signal of the line.

"The steamer runs far past the landing, turns laboriously around under the chiding of the small bells and baby whistles, and forges up to the landing, where the boat is made fast to a tree, and the gangplank runs out, assisted by the rapid-fire comments of the mate. If there was much freight to go on, the place was lighted by burning pine knots in an iron basket placed near the gangplank.

"Promptly, as if glad of the call to duty, the deck hand was up and ready for the work of loading. In those days he was a trusty machine, and was proud of his great strength, of his boat, and even of the rich vocabulary of his mate. He loved, when ashore, to talk of the big towns he made, and of the way-up people he knew in them. He had a sweetheart in every place where his boat put up over twelve hours, and his standin was good until she was courted by a man from a bigger and faster boat.

"A large and fast boat never had had much trouble in securing plenty of deck hands. But there was no prestige in accepting employment on a small stern-wheeler, devoted mostly to freight traffic, although the wages might be better. The aristocratic travelers patronized the fine side-wheeled boats, with their white-and-gold cabins, and the roustabouts liked best to work where they could be seen by patrician eyes.

"Like everybody connected with the boat, from cabin boy to pilot, he thought he was the whole show. He liked to show his strength, and the ease with which he could carry a coffee sack or a pig of lead. Yet he would permit a little, one-gallus mate, whom he could pick up and shake like a mouse, to make public reflections on his family tree in words that sizzled. The roustabout supposed the mate was hired for his proficiency in that particular line, and if he hadn't kept it up it would have meant to him that the mate was ailing or neglecting his employer's interest."

Confesses Wrecking Train.

William Davis, twenty-three, a farmer of Jasper, Ala., has confessed to wrecking the Seminole Limited train near Nauvoo by putting a spike on the track. Davis declares he put the spike on the track "just to see it get flattened out," and had no idea the train would be ditched.

Hen and Chicks in Cyclone.

A cyclone played a freakish trick on the farm of John Burns, near Perry, Mich., when it picked up a coop of chickens and the old hen and carried them forty rods over a fence into another field, where it deposited them without any damage being done.

A New Saddle Invented.

A saddle has been patented by a New Jersey inventor which includes leather flaps to cover the buckles which frequently wear out riders' clothing.

Interesting New Inventions.

A device patented by a Virginia man can be used to hold a fishing pole on land or in a boat, to signal with a bell when a fish has been hooked, to dig bait, and to cut and clean fish.

A Kansas farmer has just invented a tool that takes the place of four. It is a combination saw, sickle, corn knife, and pruning knife. The tool is made to serve the various purposes by simply turning a ratchet.

A new arrangement for mosquito bars has been devised by a Texas woman. There is an elastic band at the bottom, which keeps the netting firmly secured to the bed or cradle, making it impossible for mosquitoes or other insects to annoy sleepers. There is an opening on the side of the bar, through which the person enters the bed.

A Minneapolis woman is the patentee of a strip of flexible material to be inserted in a buttonhole to facilitate the work of sewing over its edges.

So that baggage cannot fall out on passengers' heads, a new rack for railroad cars is almost completely inclosed, access being provided by sliding doors.

To save a housewife bending over while sweeping, a dustpan has been invented that is heavy enough to stay where it is moved with the foot and with a guard to retain accumulated sweepings.

A novel sketching table for artists is supported by a single leg to which an umbrella also can be clamped to provide shade.

Bibles Behind Their Bars.

Saloon keepers in Bellaire, Ohio, are so careful in their efforts to obey the law that all have Bibles behind their bars to be used when any question arises as to the age of the person buying a drink. When the bartender is in doubt, he compels the seeker for liquor to swear on the Bible that he is over twenty-one years of age.

"Most Beautiful Man" a Bare-legged Dancer.

The most beautiful man in the world has been found. According to spectators at recent outdoor pageants near Boston, Mass., he is William Alfred Williams, of Pittsburgh, Harvard, '15, who has delighted by his esthetic dancing.

He performs bare-legged, very bare-legged, in fact. The only one compared to him is Paul Swan, a New York bare-legged dancer, but Williams is rated more Adonis-like. Experts say he has a perfect masculine profile.

Mayor Curley, of Boston, prevented bare-legged dancing on the stage in Boston during the winter, but this spring pageants with bare-legged dancing by both sexes have been given on a number of estates of wealthy folk in and about Boston. Williams has been a leading figure in all of them. His costume surely has been suited to the most tropiclike day. The girls have been bare-legged, and that's about all, but Williams goes much farther than that.

A reporter found him bare-footed, bare-legged, and bare-headed, practicing in the back yard of Miss Virginia Tanner, who directs the pageant, and dances bare-legged duets with Williams. He said he had been dancing a year and a half and was thinking of adopting it as a profession after graduating from college. This was his defense:

"The attitude of the body, in dances, is the most graceful and artistic way of telling a story."

Rooster is Phenom; It Crows Backward.

Jacob Newman, a clothier, living in Washington Street, Tarrytown, N. Y., owns a rooster that crows backward. He has another rooster that crows naturally. The other day, as two strangers were walking by Mr. Newman's yard, the natural rooster crowed, and the other answered.

"Did you ever hear such an echo?" said one of the men. "It's backward." Then they looked over the fence and heard one rooster crow and the freak rooster answer.

Mr. Newman, who was in the yard, explained that the rooster crowed backward, and it had always puzzled him.

Pumkin Patch in Pumkin.

Last fall Mrs. John Hoffman, of Lewistown, Pa., bought some pumpkins and put them away for use in making pies. A short time ago she cut one of them open and was surprised to find a pumpkin patch growing inside. The seeds had all sprouted and were growing fine, lusty vines, some of the vines having leaves.

Still Home Comforts When all Coal Goes.

Coal will disappear from the earth in three hundred years, although there are seven and one-half trillion tons left. Then, instead of freezing to death or descending in one mad rush on the tropics, humanity will know a cleaner, more comfortable existence than ever.

Huge solar engines will gather the sun's rays and transform them into heat, light, and power. Millions of horse power will be developed from waterfalls now unnoticed.

The farmer will guide an electric plow instead of a team of horses or a gasoline tractor. When the flat dweller yells down the speaking tube for more heat, the janitor of A. D. 2200 simply will throw a switch that regulates current coming perhaps clear across or under the Atlantic from the Sahara Desert.

The ideas belonged to Professor J. Paul Goode, of the University of Chicago until he gave them to an audience at Mandel Hall on a recent night. He is certain there will be no more coal in three hundred years, but equally sure some genius will have perfected by then all the wonders he described.

Seer Wins Freedom by Amazing Feat in Court.

Out of the mass of humbug and charlatanry about mind reading, fortune telling, clairvoyance, et cetera, there emerges an occasional definite fact apparently proving that the human intellect may possess psychic powers. A case in point is the exhibition of mind reading made by "Professor" Bert Reese in Judge Rosalsky's court in New York, N. Y.

Arrested and previously convicted in a magistrate's court for posing as a fortune teller, Rese strikingly demonstrated his possession of clairvoyant powers. He read names written on concealed slips of paper, gave the amount of the judge's bank balance, and performed other feats showing familiarity with what was passing in the minds of his examiners.

Obviously, a man who can do these things under conditions making collusion impossible, shows himself endowed with mental gifts as rare as they are inexplainable. Washington Irving Bishop possessed them in even greater degree; older New Yorkers readily recall his extraordinary exhibitions of occult intelligence a quarter of a century ago.

More recently, Beulah Miller, a ten-year-old Rhode Island girl, gave manifestations of the possession of such powers which aroused great scientific expectations, but her later achievements or present whereabouts seem to be unknown.

The mind-reading feats which won Reese his liberty unfortunately will give a new impetus to imposture. But

on the other hand they stimulate a legitimate interest in questions relating to the possibility of the development of a new sense and add to the data through which science may some day solve the problem of human consciousness.

"This man is not a fortune teller, but a scientist and I offer him as an exhibit," said the counsel for Reese, the accused seer, to Judge Rosalsky.

The judge selected two newspaper men to assist in the experiment. They went into an adjoining room and wrote on slips of paper the maiden names of their mothers. They also wrote two questions each on slips. The slips were brought into the room where Reese was waiting. They had been folded so that no writing was visible. Under his direction they were placed in a hat and mixed up. Then the slips were placed in the reporters' pockets.

Each man then took out a slip, still folded, and pressed it against the exhibitor's bald head. He turned to one man and said:

"Your mother's maiden name was Electa Winans."

To the other he said: "You want to know if Charley Becker is guilty. He is not really guilty."

The reporters then took two other slips from their pockets.

"You want to know how old Henry C. Terry is," promptly said Reese. Then plainly puzzled, he shook his head and went on to a question as to what was the floor covering. The next question was: "Where did I do my first newspaper work?"

He gave correctly the answer. The last slip Reese took in his hand, but did not open it. He handed it back and directed the writer to hold it. Then Reese said:

"Emma Drew was your mother's maiden name."

The answer to the first five questions had been given in a room adjoining the court, but for the last Reese walked into the courtroom and gave his answer in the presence of the judge and jury.

Judge Rosalsky wrote several questions, as follows:

"What was the ruling in the Shelly case?"

"How much money have I in the bank?" and

"What is the name of my favorite school-teacher?"

The demonstrator not only told what the questions were, but gave the correct replies. Reese is seventy-four years old.

"I don't know myself how I do it," he said. "The answers just sort of flash on my brain as a picture, just as ordinary objects are seen through the eye."

Kaiser's Big Cannon Can't Make Raindrops.

So many days during the last two months have been rainy or cloudy that a great many people are led to believe that so much wet weather is owing to the war in Europe. "Our heavy rainfall is probably caused by so much firing over there," is a remark frequently heard. Indeed, as long as man can remember, it has been a theory accepted by many that constant or heavy explosions in the air will produce rainfall. Tests of this kind have been made in various parts of the country—more often in the west and southwest—and sometimes with evident success, yet skeptics were quick to say: "Shucks, it was time they had a shower, anyway."

Now let us see how the ancients looked at this question. Almost since the beginning of history there has been a theory—a silly one, says one scientist—that battles caused rain. Battles, not explosives, observe, for in the early centuries, A. D., there were no gunpowder or similar explosives.

"Banish the thought," says Forecaster Pennywitt, of the United States Weather Bureau, in discussing the question of explosives and rainfall. "There never was a more absurd idea. Not in all the history of the world is it recorded that human endeavor wrung rain from the skies, either intentionally or unknowingly. Rain falls by the will of nature only, and the influence of man over nature, in so far as producing rain is concerned, does not exist.

"None of men's activities on earth has the slightest effect on the rainfall. If nature decrees it shall rain, then rain it will; no other power or force can bring precipitation.

"Almost since the beginning of history there has been a silly theory that battles caused rain. This was the case even before gunpowder came into use. The Greek writer, Plutarch, as far back as the year 150 A. D., held the belief that the glitter and clash of the sabers of the ancient Greek and Roman warriors on the field of honor produced rain. He believed it because it generally rained after every battle. As a matter of fact, it had to rain after every battle, because they fought only on clear days in those times; and, besides, it always rains once every three days in the year, according to average.

"After gunpowder became an instrument of destruction, rains during time of war were blamed on it. Even the United States government has shared this belief that powder will produce rain, and it wasted thousands of dollars trying to make it rain in Texas. Similar experiments were made in Europe several years ago, and in France one scientist thought that by employing the explosive he could transform hail into more harmless rain.

"Strange as it may seem to a good many people, there has been less than a normal rainfall in western Pennsylvania and other eastern districts during the last six months."

Bees Settle in a Mail Box.

The wanderlust of summer got into the blood of a swarm of bees belonging to Leo Nickoli, 448 Bellaire Avenue, Kansas City, Mo. They circled in the air and flew away. Mr. Nickoli followed.

The awning in front of the drug store of the Klee Drug Company first attracted the bees. But finding no place to alight there, the bees transferred their attentions to a mail box near by. In a moment the box was the center of the swarm, who were preparing to settle down among the letters.

Mr. Nickoli, however, had different plans. With a hive baited with honey comb, he began coaxing the bees into a new home. A crowd of two hundred persons watched his operation, which lasted several hours.

Aged Preacher Finds His Long Lost Sister.

An only sister, whom he had not seen nor heard from for more than forty-five years, and whom he believed to be dead, has been found by Reverend W. H. H. Ruble, of Harrison, Ark., and immediately after the locating of the long-lost sister, he has received news that sight has been restored to the woman who has been blind for many years, as a result of cataract.

Reverend Ruble's sister is Mrs. E. J. Willis, of Knoxville, Tenn. She is ninety-two years of age, and was last seen by her brother more than forty-five years ago in

Cleveland, a small town of Tennessee. As many people do, the brother and sister kept in touch for a time, but gradually ceased writing, until each had changed address and the old addresses were forgotten.

Receiving no word for years, each believed the other to be dead, until last January, when the annual conference of the M. E. Church was held in Harrison, Ark. At that time Reverend Ruble met Reverend Murphy, a delegate, who told him of the whereabouts of Chaplain J. A. Ruble, of the Old Settlers' Home in Johnson City, to whom Reverend Ruble wrote, believing that the chaplain might be his nephew. The belief was true, and the letter from Harrison was forwarded to Mrs. Willis, who was overjoyed when she wrote again to her brother, the first time in nearly half a century.

Arizona Girl Carries Mail on Horse.

Miss Matilda Sorey, of Higley, Ariz., may not be the only girl in the United States who carries mail on a R. F. D. route, but she is probably the only one who does so on horseback. When a new route was established out of Higley, Miss Sorey, who is just twenty-one years old, was appointed carrier. Her friends supposed she would use a horse and buggy, but, instead, she covers the route six days a week on her handsome gray saddle horse. She carries the mail in a sack swung over the pommel of her cowboy saddle.

Didn't Even Have a Barrel.

A short time ago C. J. Debes, who lives on a farm a few miles south of Hagerman, N. M., arose early, as was his custom, and, after lighting his gasoline stove and placing his kettle on, sauntered out through the delightful morning air to feed his stock, without changing his night robe for the more substantial clothing of the day.

Debes being a bachelor, and there being no near neighbors, everything went well with him until he started to return to his house and found it almost consumed by fire. His predicament seemed precarious, when the neighbors, seeing the flames, rushed to the scene. Debes, however, took refuge in the barn until a friendly neighbor brought in some heavier raiment. The gasoline stove had exploded and enveloped the entire building in flames, making quick work of its destruction.

No Government Reward for Passenger Pigeon.

Recent widespread newspaper accounts to the effect that the United States Department of Agriculture is offering ten thousand dollars reward to the person finding a passenger or "wood"-pigeon nest containing two eggs, resulted in hundreds of letters being sent to the department.

The report is not based upon facts, as the department has offered no such reward, and there is every reason to believe the passenger pigeon which formerly roamed the country in flocks of millions is extinct. In 1910 about one thousand dollars in rewards was offered by Clark University for the first undisturbed nests of the passenger pigeon to be found in the United States. This was a great stimulus to action. The hunt for this pigeon was fruitless. The offer of rewards was renewed for several years, until it was fully established that the pigeon was extinct.

The passenger pigeon up to 1885 ranged the American continent east of the Rocky Mountains. The mourning dove has often been mistaken for the passenger pigeon, which in a general way it resembles. However, this bird is quite distinct from the passenger pigeon; it is shorter and has different color markings.

The press reports stated that the now extinct passenger pigeon was valued because of its usefulness in destroying the gispy moth and other moths and pests which are doing millions of dollars of damage. Although the preservation of this pigeon is much to be desired, it would be of absolutely no value in eliminating the gispy moth, as the pigeons are almost entirely vegetarian in their diet.

Wounded Dog Returns Home.

A dog belonging to Edward Dougherty, of Spring Grove, Pa., was shot through the head twice with a thirty-eight-caliber revolver by Dougherty. The dog lay on the same spot for seven days and seven nights, but on the beginning of the eighth day he came back to his old home, hardly able to drag himself along. After being fed and given water to drink, the dog seemed to be all right.

The dog ate eggs from the nests in Dougherty's henhouse before his punishment and since his extraordinary experience he has not eaten one egg. Mr. Dougherty is sure he put two bullets through the dog's brain.

Muskrat and Trout Battle.

Lew McQuiston, a well-known angler of Bellefonte, Pa., witnessed a unique battle a few days ago between a muskrat and a two-foot trout.

McQuiston went to Spring Creek shortly before dusk to try and land some big trout. While whipping the stream, he saw something doing on the other side of the creek, about sixty feet away from where he was standing. In the quickly gathering shadows it was hard to tell at first what it was, but after closer inspection he saw that it was a mammoth trout and a muskrat.

They were engaged in mortal combat, and they slashed around through the water until it was churned into foam. Then the muskrat managed to get out on the bank, pulling the trout along with it. But the big trout seemed to be able to fight on land as well as in the water, flopping around and holding on to the muskrat's nose until they finally both fell back into the water.

Then there was another lashing and foaming, and the noise died away. A few ripples told that the struggle was ended.

McQuiston looked around in the water for evidence of who had won the battle, but found neither the muskrat or the trout. He does not know whether it was a fight to the finish or a draw.

Tongue Fenders Demanded.

Tongue fenders for salted-peanut vending machines. That's the latest slogan of Montclair, N. Y., which already has put a legal muffler on barking dogs and crowing roosters. It was proposed by Health Commissioner James McDonough after he saw a small boy thrust his tongue into a cup container of a vending machine to get the "crumbs."

Finds Pennies in Turtle.

Roy Bowsher, of Ashville, Ohio, went fishing last week and caught a turtle, which he sold to C. R. Cook, proprietor of a saloon. When Cook opened the turtle, preparatory to serving it on his lunch counter, he found two hundred and thirty-four pennies in it.

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